THE CHURCH AND HOMOSEXUALITY

The United Presbyterian Church
in the United States of America

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The Office of the General Assembly was directed to send a copy of the Background Paper of the Task Force to Study Homosexuality, which was received by the 190th General Assembly (1978) as a study document, and the Policy Statement and Recommendations, which were adopted by the 190th General Assembly (1978), to all congregations, presbyteries, synods, and to others upon request.

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Abbreviations

C—The Westminster Confession of Faith
C-67—The Confession of 1967
ch—Chapter
G—The Form of Government
H—The Heidelberg Catechism
SC—The Shorter Catechism
SH—The Second Helvetic Confession
v.—verse

Preface

The 188th General Assembly (1976) of The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America directed "that a task force be established, related to its Advisory Council on Church and Society," to study "Christian approaches to homosexuality, with special reference to the ordination of avowed practicing homosexuals." The work of the task force was to be reported annually to the General Assembly.

The task force was appointed, at the direction of the General Assembly, jointly by the Moderator of the 188th General Assembly (1976), Dr. Thelma C. D. Adair, and the then Chairperson of the Advisory Council on Church and Society, Ms. Jeanne C. Marshall. It was further directed that the task force be composed of "people broadly representative of the life of our church, both ministers and laypersons . . . experts in such fields as biblical interpretation, theology, ethics, psychiatry, sociology, and law" and that those persons "shall represent a spectrum of all sides of these issues."

Appointment of the full task force was announced by Dr. Adair and Ms. Marshall on September 24, 1976. The nineteen members were:

Ms. Virginia West Davidson, Rochester, NY, Chairperson
Rev. Wilbur R. Brandli, White Pigeon, MI
Rev. Gail G. Buchwalter, Pittsburgh, PA
Rev. Donald Reed Caughey, Ellensburg, WA
Rev. Robert M. Davidson, New York, NY
Dr. John Duckett, Philadelphia, PA
Rev. George R. Edwards, Louisville, KY (on sabbatical leave in West Germany beginning June 1977)
Mr. Chris Glaser, West Hollywood, CA
Dr. Willard Heckel, Newark, NJ
Rev. Virgil L. Jones, Detroit, MI
Rev. Richard Lovelace, Hamilton, MA
Rev. Aahmes E. Overton, Hayward, CA
Rev. Byron E. Shafer, Yonkers, NY
Rev. Robert E. Simpson, St. Louis, MO
Mr. Dwight C. Smith, Jr., Loudonville, NY
Rev. Gloria Tate, Indianapolis, IN
Rev. Kenneth L. Vaux, Houston, TX
Ms. Barbara P. White, Cleveland Heights, OH
Rev. Donald M. Williams, Van Nuys, CA.

Task force members encompassed a broad range of theological perspectives and experience, and a number were specialists in fields related to the task force's area of study.

The task force met seven times: October 14–16, 1976, in Chicago; December 2–4, 1976, in St. Louis; February 17–19, 1977, in Houston; June 22 and 25, 1977, in Philadelphia; August 24–27, 1977, in Chicago; October 14–16, 1977, in St. Louis; and January 4–7, 1978, in New York City. Presentations were given by task force members and other experts on the major biblical, theological, historical, ethical, biomedical, and psychological issues. The task force also met with Dr. Adair and Ms. Marshall.

Regional hearings were held in order for the task force to hear the church at large: March 10–12, 1977, in Cleveland; March 31–April 2, 1977, in St. Louis; May 19–21, 1977, in San Francisco; June 23–24, 1977, in Philadelphia, in conjunction with the meeting of the 189th General Assembly (1977).

Other ways in which the task force learned the church's present attitudes included a letter to executive presbyters and stated clerks of presbyteries, requesting information about studies taking place within their areas or conclusions already reached; the use of the January 1977 Presbyterian Panel to learn about current attitudes; requests for written personal testimony from those who could not attend a regional hearing and yet wanted to be heard and from persons who have experience as or with homosexual persons, former homosexuals, and others who wanted to inform the task force; and attendance by several task force members at the Consultation on Homosexuality sponsored by Presbyterians United for Biblical Concerns, January 25–27, 1977, in Pittsburgh. In addition, as task force members responded to requests to address presbyteries and other groups, they had opportunity to listen to many Presbyterians' concerns.

Charged by the General Assembly "to circulate to the churches materials designed to discover attitudes within our church on the subject, and to provide information back to the church," the task force prepared two packets of informational and educational materials, which were offered widely for purchase by those who wanted to engage in a study parallel to the task force's own study. The packets include an annotated bibliography created by the task force, transcripts from some of the task force meetings, papers prepared by task force members, and other papers on specific technical subjects. More than 6,000 packets have been ordered since they first became available in April 1977.

In its prospectus for study prepared by the Advisory Council on Church and Society and accepted by the task force at its first meeting, the group's purpose was described this way:

1. Identify and evaluate various theological and biblical perspectives on homosexuality, giving attention to specific biblical texts and themes. Give attention to confessional stands and specific attention to the positions taken by the 182nd General Assembly (1970).

2. Survey general studies and research, and assess theories and assumptions about homosexuality in light of biblical and theological perspectives and current understandings about homosexuality in the social and behavioral sciences, in homophile groups, and in society at large.

3. Identify and evaluate areas of ethical concern, with particular emphasis on personal freedom, personal responsibility, and human rights, and discriminatory practices, both in the church and in society generally.

4. Suggest guidelines for faithful Christian response to the conflicts between values, rights, and human communities manifest in relation to homosexuality, both in the life of the church, including ordination, and with respect to broad social policies.

The task force completed its work and on January 12, 1978, transmitted to the Advisory Council on Church and Society a background paper, policy statement, and recommendations, and a minority policy statement and recommendations. The chairperson of the task force observed in transmitting the report:

> During the months of study, reading, listening, and writing, we have at times tested the possible limits of diversity beyond which we would not continue to exist as a task force. We never exceeded those limits, I believe, because we remained faithful in our intent to listen to one another carefully and seriously challenge each other; to respect one another's opinions and insights; to try honestly to stand in each other's shoes and thus discover how it might feel for someone else. At times we either argued or agreed with one another; laughed or cried with each other; shared our deepest burdens or joys with one another; listened carefully or confronted each other; forgave and loved each other; played, prayed, and sang with each other; and broke bread together around our Lord's table.
>
> We transmit all of these documents to you as evidence of how far we have come together on this journey, and how far we still have to go. Where we agree, perhaps it will be seen as a small sign of the inbreaking of God's kingdom in our midst. Taken together, the documents represent our rich diversities within the unity we have in Christ as a part of his body. It is to Christ we are all bound; and it is as we gather around his table, humbly and with thanksgiving, that we are made whole.

On January 16, 1978, the Advisory Council on Church and Society voted to transmit the report and its recommendations, together with the minority statement and recommendations, to the General Assembly for decision. The Advisory Council recommended that the General Assembly adopt the statement and recommendations proposed by the majority of the task force, with three members recording their negative votes.

Following regular United Presbyterian procedures, the full report was printed immediately and circulated to all those persons elected by the presbyteries as commissioners to the 190th General Assembly (1978), called to convene on May 16, 1978, in San Diego, California. Extra copies were printed and 20,540 were purchased by individuals and church groups for further intensive study.

According to the rules of the General Assembly, the report was placed in the hands of a committee composed of forty-four commissioners elected by the General Assembly and a chairperson appointed by the newly-elected Moderator. That committee also was given seventeen overtures and twenty-two resolutions from presbyteries related to the issues of homosexuality and a large volume of communications from United Presbyterian congregations and individual members.

The Assembly Committee on the Church and Homosexuality met in plenary session for open hearings and for general discussion of the report submitted to them. A drafting subcommittee then worked in closed session to produce the draft statement and recommendations that were debated and amended by the full assembly committee in an open plenary session. The product of this four-day process was then printed and distributed to all General Assembly commissioners as the document to be debated by the full General Assembly.

On Monday, May 22, 1978, the 190th General Assembly (1978) devoted approximately ten hours to plenary debate and approved the report as printed here. The Office of the General Assembly was directed to print both the background paper, which was received by the General Assembly as a resource for continuing study, and the policy statement and recommendations, which were adopted as the official position of the General Assembly. The Office of the General Assembly was also directed to make copies available to all United Presbyterian congregations and judicatories and to others who wished to order them.

Since persons who are not United Presbyterians may be reading this report, a brief word of explanation as to the status of its contents may be helpful:

1. The background paper "The Church and Homosexuality," by the Reverend Byron E. Shafer, was received by the 190th General Assembly (1978) exactly as submitted to it by the Advisory Council on Church and Society. It is reprinted as an aid to study and does not have official policy status.

2. Sections of the background paper refer to "majority" and "minority" positions within the Task Force to Study Homosexuality. These positions formed the basis of separate recommended policy statements and recommendations that accompanied the background paper as it was submitted to the General Assembly but which are not printed here since the General Assembly did not approve either as submitted. Readers should understand that "majority" and "minority" positions as reported here reflect the thinking only of the members of the task force and not that of the United Presbyterian membership.

3. The "Statement and Recommendations" printed here are those developed and approved by the 190th General Assembly (1978) itself. They are different from either the "majority" or "minority" reports recommended by the task force, although elements of both are incorporated. As noted, these are the official positions of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church concerning homosexuality.

William P. Thompson
Stated Clerk

New York, New York
June, 1978

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THE CHURCH AND HOMOSEXUALITY

by the Reverend Byron E. Shafer

I. Homosexuality: Psychotherapy and the Empirical Sciences

A. *"Homosexual"—The Problem of Definition*

> One of the main difficulties underlying any discussion of the problem of homosexuality is that of definition. What, exactly, do we mean when we talk about homosexuality? Is it a state of mind or a form of behavior? (Marmor, *Sexual Inversion,* p.1.)

One approach to the definition of "homosexual" focuses on overt behavior: anyone who repeatedly engages in sexual relations with a person or persons of the same sex is homosexual. Such a definition excludes the adolescent who occasionally experiments with homosexual behavior. It also excludes the person who has strong emotional attraction to persons of the same sex but does not express this attraction genitally.

Another approach to the definition of "homosexual" focuses on psychological response: anyone who experiences repeated, intense attraction to a person or persons of the same sex is homosexual. Such a definition excludes the casual experimenter. It also excludes people whose repeated homosexual behavior is motivated by circumstance rather than by affectional attraction and preference. Thus, the normally heterosexual prisoner who engages in homosexual behavior because he or she has no sexual access to the opposite sex is not called "homosexual" (or at most is called "circumstantially homosexual"). Included as "homosexual" in the psychological response approach to definition are people with repeated, intense attraction to those of the same sex who nevertheless refrain from genital behavior or who nevertheless choose to express their sexuality in heterosexual patterns of relationship (including marriage).

In current social scientific literature, the psychological response approach to definition is the more common and accepted one. Homosexuality is viewed as an affectional orientation rather than as a specific pattern of overt behavior.

The Kinsey studies of male sexual behavior in 1948 and female sexual behavior in 1953 concluded that relatively few people are "exclusively homosexual" in orientation and behavior throughout life (Kinsey estimated 4 percent of males and 1–3 percent of females). However, the studies showed that others are "primarily homosexual" (commonly estimated today to be an additional 3–6 percent among both males and females) and that many "heterosexual" persons experience more than incidental homosexual impulses or behavior after age 16 (Kinsey estimated 25 percent among males and about half as many among females; many researchers believe these figures to be too high). The evidence thus shows that "homosexual" and "heterosexual" are not necessarily exclusive categories. In a statistically significant minority of the population homosexual and heterosexual impulses and behavior combine—albeit in very different proportions. Kinsey ranked people on a 7-point continuum from 0, exclusively heterosexual in psychological reactions and overt experiences, to 6, exclusively homosexual in psychological reactions and overt experiences, with 3 being "equally heterosexual and homosexual." (See Kinsey, et al., *Male,* ch. 21, figure 161. Also reprinted in McCaffrey, ed., *The Homosexual Dialectic,* p. 18.)

B. *The Creation of a Person: Male or Female*

1. Biological Sex

The chromosomal sex of a person is determined at conception when in ordinary circumstances the X (female) chromosome of the egg is mated with either an X-carrying sperm (producing an XX cell—a chromosomal female) or a Y-carrying sperm (producing an XY cell—a chromosomal male). In either case, the single fertilized cell rapidly develops into an embryo having both a pair of undifferentiated gonads capable of developing into either ovaries or testicles and also two sets of ducts—one of which (the Müllerian) can develop into a uterus, fallopian tubes, and upper vagina and the other of which (the Wolffian) can develop into seminal vesicles, prostate gland, and *vasa deferentia.* (For a more detailed description of prenatal sexual development see Money and Tucker, *Sexual Signatures,* pp. 36–62.) Thus, both the chromosomal male embryo and the chromosomal female embryo have the potential to develop either male or female genitalia and structures. Nature's own momentum is to produce Eve. Both XX and XY embryos will develop female genitalia and structures unless "something more" occurs to divert and suppress that development. In the normal male embryo (XY) that "something more" occurs at the end of the sixth week of development when the Y chromosome "instructs" the gonads to differentiate as testicles rather than as ovaries. The differentiated testicles then begin to secrete both Müllerian inhibiting substance (MIS), which suppresses the development of internal female structures, and testosterone, which stimulates the development of the male external genitalia and Wolffian structures. Much can, and sometimes does, go wrong in this complicated process of differentiation—resulting either in a miscarriage or in some incongruence at birth between an infant's chromosomal sex and its genital development. However, in the large majority of cases normal development and birth occur, and obstetricians are able to declare with certainty, "It's a girl!" or "It's a boy!" At birth, the infant's biological sex has been determined.

2. Gender Identity and Role*

However, at birth the infant's own *core gender identity* has not yet been determined. By *core gender identity* is meant the central psychological conviction, "I am a female," or "I am a male." (On this topic see Stoller, *Sex and Gender,* or Stoller in Marmor, ed., *Sexual Inversion,* and also Money and Tucker, pp. 63–118.) It is possible for a biological male to develop the central psychological conviction, "I am a fe-

---

*"Gender Identity. The sameness, unity, and persistence of one's individuality as male, female, or ambivalent, in greater or lesser degree, especially as it is experienced in self-awareness and behavior; gender identity is the private experience of gender role, and gender role is the public expression of gender identity.

"Gender Role. Everything that a person says and does, to indicate to others or to the self the degree that one is either male or female or ambivalent; it includes but is not restricted to sexual arousal and response; gender role is the public expression of gender identity, and gender identity is the private experience of gender role." (Money and Tucker, *Sexual Signatures,* p. 9.)

male"—and vice versa. According to an increasingly accepted scientific hypothesis, humans possess a bisexual potential for developing gender identity and related behavior (gender role). That is, the brains and neurological pathways of all persons are "wired" at birth both for being "masculine" (the conviction "I am a male," coupled with "I, a male" behavior) and for being "feminine" (the conviction "I am a female," coupled with "I, a female" behavior). Which gender identity and related behavior actually develop is believed to be determined by the interplay of two factors: (a) a prenatal hormonal setting of neural tissues or some other kind of prenatal biological "disposition"; and (b) postnatal socialization and learning. (For different opinions about the relative influence of the biological and psychosocial factors, compare Diamond with Money in Beach, ed., *Human Sexuality.*) Most scholarly opinion, at present, tends to emphasize the primacy of psychosocial factors. Parents and society-at-large react differently to boys and girls and, behaving differently toward them, communicate to infants and children the range of acceptable gender schemata—that is, the range of acceptable definitions of what it means to be male and what it means to be female. These gender schemata then form the framework within which the infant's and child's gender identity and role develop.

Until 18 months of age an infant's core gender identity remains plastic. That is, it does not become rigidly fixed as male or female. The critical period for the determination of core gender identity appears to be that associated with the onset of language acquisition—18 months until 3 years. After age 3, one's core gender identity is fixed. In the huge majority of cases the obstetrician's judgment, "It's a boy," is confirmed by the 4-year-old's self-judgment, "I am a male"; and "It's a girl" is similarly confirmed by "I am a female." However, for some few individuals the biological and psychological judgments are discordant. The individual may think of herself or himself as both female and male or as neither female nor male. Such discordance is susceptible to psychotherapeutic treatment. Or the biological male may hold the psychological conviction that he is female, and the biological female may hold the conviction that she is male. Such discordance—the mark of true "transsexuals"—has not proved susceptible to psychotherapeutic alteration. Upon growing up, the transsexual will not consider "her" or "his" affectional preference for a person of the same biological sex to be homosexual, for they are of different psychological genders. The inevitable desire of the transsexual is to alter the contours and structure of the body to conform with the psychological self.

Beyond age 3, one's *core* gender identity is fixed, but elements of one's gender identity can still change in some directions; for a person is the product of continual interaction between heredity and environment. (Money and Tucker, *Sexual Signatures,* p. 37.) For example, the conviction "I am a male" may remain stable while "I, a male" nonetheless come to identify in certain ways with my mother rather than my father. Also, beyond age 3, one's gender role remains plastic. Thus, for example, the conviction, "I am a male" may remain stable while the ways in which "I, a male" behave are susceptible to change and variation. Through a combination of predisposing biological factors and ongoing psychosocial factors, "I, a male" may come to include in my repertoire of behavior rather more or rather less of those behaviors associated by society-at-large with a female gender schema. Within today's culture, the point at which any particular person's gender identity may become seriously threatened by the adoption of behavior usually associated with the other gender's schema is widely variant. What one man sees as behavior threatening to male gender identity (hence as "effeminate") can well be thought by another man to be consistent with male gender identity (hence as "not effeminate"). It is important to understand that homosexual behavior can be threatening to one person's gender identity and nonthreatening to another person's gender identity. It is also important to understand that both partners in male homosexual behavior can play masculine roles and that both partners in female homosexual behavior can play feminine roles.

3. Conclusion

Unlike the creation of most other creatures on our planet, the creation of a person as male or female is incomplete at birth. Much of one's gender identity and gender role await postnatal formation. The creation of a person as male or female involves both prenatal biological processes and postnatal psychosocial processes.

C. *The Creation of a Person: Heterosexual or Homosexual*

Just as a person's gender identity is not fixed at birth, so too, in the opinion of most empirical scientists, one's sexual orientation is not fixed at birth. Humans are neither heterosexual nor homosexual by biological determination alone. Biological factors may be involved in the development of sexual orientation. (See, for example, both Diamond and Hoffman in Beach, ed., *Human Sexuality,* pp. 53–58, 176–177, and also Meyer-Bahlburg, "Sex Hormones and Male Homosexuality," pp. 315–321.) However, psychosocial factors rather than biological factors appear to be primarily determinative. This in no way indicates that a person is conscious of psychosocial factors shaping his or her sexual orientation, because these processes begin at such an early age that in essence sexual orientation cannot be said to be chosen.

As an example from a larger body of supporting evidence that suggests the dominance of psychosocial factors, two matched pairs of hermaphrodites, identical in genetic, gonadal, and fetal hormonal sex but different in core gender identity, developed heterosexual orientations consistent with their core gender identities rather than with their biological sex. (See Money and Ehrhardt, *Man and Woman, Boy and Girl,* pp. 154–158. Compare also Meyer-Bahlburg, pp. 315–316.) Also, cross-cultural data show that in some societies males develop diachronic patterns of homosexual and heterosexual behavior. That is, at one stage in life they engage exclusively in homosexual behavior, and at the next stage in life, primarily or exclusively in heterosexual behavior. (See Money and Ehrhardt, pp. 130–131, 135–139.) This, too, suggests that sexual orientation is more a function of psychosocial development than of biological constitution.

Whereas most empirical scientists agree on the

general principle that sexual orientation arises from psychosocial factors related to the development of gender identity and role, with biological and endocrinological factors perhaps having some mediating influence, no consensus exists on what psychosocial factors are determinative or on how they are determinative. Indeed, several scientists have recently suggested that the factors causing homosexuality are so numerous, diverse, and complex that we should no longer speak of homosexuality as if it were a single phenomenon but should rather speak of homosexualities (and of course by implication not of heterosexuality but of heterosexualities). (See Bell in Cole and Dienstbier, eds., *Nebraska Symposium,* 1973; and also Stoller, *Perversion,* pp. 199 and 205.)

Given the large number of suggested etiologies (or causes) for homosexuality (Hatterer, *Changing Homosexuality in the Male,* pp. 34–42, lists approximately 70 etiological factors for male homosexuality alone), and also given the generally accepted opinion that psychotherapy and the empirical sciences have not unraveled the mystery of the sources of sexual orientation, a review of various specific etiologies will not be undertaken here. (For such a review see Gould, "What We Don't Know About Homosexuality"; Bieber, et al., *Homosexuality,* ch. 1; Blair, *Etiological and Treatment Literature;* Churchill, *Homosexual Behavior Among Males,* chs. 5, 6; Gagnon and Simon, *Sexual Conduct,* pp. 133–139, 189–194; Hedblom in McCaffrey; and Karlen, *Sexuality and Homosexuality,* chs. 15, 17, 24, 30.) In view of certain common stereotypes, it is necessary to emphasize, however, that molestation of children is not cited in contemporary psychiatric and empirical literature as a cause of homosexuality, and seduction of youths is only rarely cited. (On this point, see, for example, Bieber, "Homosexuality," p. 2639; Tripp, *The Homosexual Matrix,* p. 91; West, *Homosexuality,* pp. 121–124; and Churchill, pp. 108–109, 214–215. Hatterer's listing of etiological factors implies that for a child or youth to become homosexual through homosexual activity requires either persistent and consistent exposure to overt homoerotic influence (p. 39) or a previously existing psychological vulnerability to exploitation (pp. 40–41).

The overwhelming majority of human beings develop a heterosexual orientation. Homosexuality as a minority phenomenon has been variously understood by contemporary psychotherapists, clinicians, and social scientists to be (a) a deviant development—necessarily pathological; (b) a variant development—sometimes pathological, but more often not; (c) a normal development—consistent with humans' bisexual capacity.

(a) *A deviant development—necessarily pathological.* According to this understanding, homosexuality is an adaptation and accommodation to some hidden, incapacitating, and unrealistic fear of heterosexuality—whether that fear be of people of the opposite sex, genitalia of the opposite sex, heterosexual forms of behavior, or whatever. Underlying this view is the assumption that although humans possess the capacity for homosexuality, all also possess an inborn tendency toward heterosexuality. One becomes homosexual only if "interfered with." (See Bieber, et al., ch. 12.) In order to overcome the incapacitating, unrealistic fears and to facilitate the development of normal heterosexuality, all homosexual persons need therapy.

The therapeutic prognosis for "reorientation" is not, however, particularly optimistic. For example, Bieber, et al., reported that of 72 "exclusively homosexual" patients who had undergone psychotherapy, 14 (19.44%) had become "exclusively heterosexual," 14 (19.44%) had become "bisexual," 2 (2.77%) had become "sexually inactive," and 42 (58.33%) had remained "exclusively homosexual." "Reorientation" was more successful among the 30 "bisexual" patients. Fifteen (50%) had become "exclusively heterosexual," 13 (43.33%) had remained "bisexual," and 2 (6.67%) had become "sexually inactive." (See Bieber, et al., p. 276.) Similarly, Hatterer reported a follow-up study of 143 out of 200 patients who had undergone psychotherapy (the other 57 had not been out of therapy long enough or could not be located). Of the 143, Hatterer judged 49 (34.27%) to have "recovered," 18 (12.59%) to have "partially recovered," and 76 (53.15%) to have "remained homosexual" (of whom 28 (19.58%) were judged "palliated" and 48 (33.57%) "unchanged"). Hatterer categorized all 76 of those who remained homosexual as "6's" on the Kinsey continuum. (See above, Section A, paragraph 4.) Of the 12 other "6's" among the 143, 4 "recovered" and 8 "partially recovered." (See Hatterer, pp. 465–483.) Thus, the therapeutic prognosis for those who are "exclusively homosexual" is not particularly good.

A variation of the view that homosexuality arises as an accommodation to a fear of heterosexuality finds that the motivation for homosexual behavior may also involve other factors, such as strivings for power and dependency. (See Ovesey in Marmor, ed., *Sexual Inversion,* pp. 218–231; and Ovesey, *Homosexuality and Pseudohomosexuality,* pp. 18–31, 75–99, 100–124. Ovesey actually calls the power and dependency motivations "pseudohomosexual.") Again, therapy is called for, but the therapist is urged to be sensitive to the interaction and mutual reinforcement of the multiple motivations.

(b) *A variant development—sometimes pathological, but more often not.* Recently, an increasing number of psychotherapists, clinicians, and social scientists who accept in general the view that homosexuality arises as an adaptation to developmental trauma and anxiety have rejected the conclusion that homosexuality is, therefore, necessarily a mental disorder. First, they do not accept the assumption that all humans possess an "inborn tendency toward heterosexuality." Thus, they do not consider homosexuality to be necessarily maladaptive. On the contrary, homosexuality may be part of what is by ordinary psychiatric standards a successful, personally satisfying adaptation to varying combinations of difficult circumstances, psychodynamic factors, or both. Second, these psychotherapists, clinicians, and social scientists judge whether or not an individual's homosexuality is pathological by whether or not there is clear-cut evidence of associated ego-destructive feelings, irrational behavior, or socially destructive acts. They do not assume that the existence of the orientation in and of itself is pathological. (See, for example, Marmor, "Homo-

sexuality and Cultural Value Systems;" and Gagnon and Simon, pp. 137–138.)

That there are in our society countless happy, well-adjusted, emotionally mature, stable homosexual persons who function as responsibly, effectively, and lovingly as do many heterosexual persons has been well documented. (For example, see the works of Hooker; Rosen; Weinberg and Williams; Saghir and Robins listed in the Bibliography.) Also, as is the case among heterosexual persons, there are numerous unhappy, poorly adjusted, emotionally immature, unstable homosexual persons. The advocates of (b) insist that in treating those homosexual persons in the latter category, careful distinction must be made between those whose poor adjustment is a function of their childhood developmental history and those whose poor adjustment is a function of hostility, discrimination, or oppression experienced in society's reactions to their developed homosexuality. Treatment goals and methods should vary accordingly. To assist the patient to become a well-adjusted homosexual person may often be a more practical, desirable, and attainable goal than to reorient the patient to become a well-adjusted heterosexual person.

In agreement with view (b), the Trustees of the American Psychiatric Association voted unanimously (with two abstentions) on December 15, 1973, to remove the category "homosexuality" from its list of mental disorders and to substitute for it the category "sexual orientation disturbance."

> This category [sexual orientation disturbance] is for individuals whose sexual interests are directed primarily toward people of the same sex and *who are either disturbed by, in conflict with, or wish to change their sexual orientation.* This diagnostic category is distinguished from homosexuality, which by itself does not necessarily constitute a psychiatric disorder. Homosexuality per se is one form of sexual behavior and, like other forms of sexual behavior which are not by themselves psychiatric disorders, is not listed in this nomenclature of mental disorders. (APA, *DSM-II,* 302.0; emphasis added.)

This action was subsequently ratified by a mail referendum among APA members (5,854 (58.4%) in support; 3,810 (38%) opposed; and 367 (3.6%) abstaining) and endorsed by the American Psychological Association.*

(c) *A normal development—consistent with humans' bisexual capacity.* Those who hold view (b) reject the notion of an inborn tendency to heterosexuality in all humans. However, many assume the psychosocial pressure toward heterosexuality to be so great in our culture that any development of homosexuality in opposition to this force must arise from some strong trauma or anxiety. Learning theorists and behaviorists, such as W. Churchill, reject this assumption if it is applied universally. In Churchill's view, the human, unlike other animals, is born without any form of sexual instinct. The human has the capacity to respond to any and all sexual stimuli. Although it is true that our culture is basically antihomosexual, and although it is true that some homosexuality is pathological, it is also true that some people under some circumstances are positively conditioned to homosexual stimuli. That is, their homosexuality arises in response to experiences of pleasure, not necessarily genital. Not all people are equally affected by a generally negative social environment. In one way or another, Churchill argues, some people experience early, pervasive positive conditioning to homosexual stimuli, although he does not identify any specific "positive homosexual stimuli." The stimuli may be received at a very early age when the broader negative attitudes of society have not yet been perceived or valued by the child. However, they may also be received at an older age if the pleasure attached to such stimuli is sufficiently strong to overcome society's negative conditioning. Homosexuality is a natural option of the human species. In an accepting society, homosexuality would develop without pain or pathology.

A central tenet of behaviorism teaches that what has been learned can be unlearned either by de-programming or by extended interruption of the stimulus-response connection. Thus, in theory, homosexuality that has been learned through positive conditioning should be readily susceptible to change through aversion therapy (the association of homosexual behavior with negative stimuli) or directive counseling. However, a pattern of primary or exclusive homosexuality in adults appears to be resistant to permanent reversal by behavior therapy, just as it is by psychotherapy (Churchill, pp. 283–284; Karlen, pp. 588–592; Saghir and Robins, *Male and Female Homosexuality,* pp. 318–319). It is apparently the case that in all forms of therapy, 20–50 percent of those homosexual patients who are well-motivated for change experience a genuine shift in preferential sexual object choice. (Marmor in Freedman, et al., eds., *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry,* 1975, pp. 1518–1519; see also Karlen, pp. 582–588; and West, pp. 230–237.)

In the face of unexplainable complexity, the inquirer again has cause to speculate that there is no such single entity as homosexuality. Instead, there are multiple homosexualities, each arising out of a different blend of nurture and nature—some developing as pathologies; some as successful adjustments to difficult or simply variant circumstances or psychodynamic factors; some as positive responses to reinforcing stimuli; some as successful adjustments or positive responses that subsequently turn neurotic in the face of a hostile society; some as pathologies that subsequently lose their pathological motivation and become non-pathological.

Whatever the elements, whatever the blend, most homosexual adults have no awareness of having "chosen" homosexuality. In early adolescence when others' fantasies focused on the opposite sex, theirs focused on the same sex. In later adolescence when others enjoyed rating, dating, and mating, they did not. In early adulthood when others fell in and out of love with the opposite sex, they fell in and out of love with the same sex. In "early marriage" when others regularized and legitimized their sexual activity in the context of lifelong companionship, they had only the bar, the bath, and "the closet." Somehow, in some unrecountable way, something "different" had happened to shape their development during the critical years of childhood. Nurture and nature had combined to "create" them homosexual.

*For a vivid illustration of the changing trend in psychiatric thought between 1967 and 1975, compare the article on homosexuality in the first edition of *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry* (Freedman and Kaplan, eds., 1967, pp. 963–976), which was written by Bieber, with the article on homosexuality in the second edition (Freedman, et al., eds., 1975, pp. 1510–1520), which was written by Marmor.

D. *Social Patterns of Homosexuality*

From a sociological perspective, "the patterns of adult homosexuality are consequent upon the social structures and values that surround the homosexual after he becomes or conceives himself as homosexual rather than upon original and ultimate causes." (Gagnon and Simon, p. 136). Thus, to understand the values and lifestyles of homosexual persons, one must direct primary attention "to the ways in which the homosexual is affected by his social situation, for example, how the connotations and expectations surrounding homosexuality affect the homosexual's behavior and self-concept." (Weinberg and Williams, *Male Homosexuals,* p. 21.) Four elements are particularly important in defining that social situation: formal legal prohibitions, conventional mores, informal discriminations, and the confining web of attitudes and expectations that accompanies the label "homosexual."

In 31 states, private sex acts between consenting adults of the same sex are against the law.* The original intent of most state laws was to prohibit anal intercourse, fellatio, and cunnilingus between any two consenting adults—whether of opposite sex or same sex. Today, the laws, when enforced at all, are almost always enforced only against homosexual persons. Maximum penalties for a first offense range from one year in prison to life. A Gallup Poll conducted among 1,513 representative American adults in more than 300 scientifically selected localities during the period June 17–20, 1977, shows that 43 percent believe that "homosexual relations between consenting adults" should be legal, 43 percent believe that they should not be legal, and 14 percent have no opinion. Among "regular churchgoers," 39 percent believe that they should be legal, 48 percent believe that they should not be legal, and 13 percent have no opinion. (See Gallup, "Difficult Lot," pp. 6–7.)

In all 50 states, private sex acts between consenting adults of the same sex are against the conventional mores, although in the last seven years attitudes have shifted. In a series of individual, two-hour interviews, with 3,018 representative American adults, conducted during 1970, Levitt and Klassen found that 70.2 percent considered sex acts between persons of the same sex who love each other to be "always wrong." Another 8.4 percent considered them to be "almost always wrong." ("Public Attitudes Toward Homosexuality," p. 31.) Homosexuality was found to be "very much" obscene and vulgar by 65.2 percent. Another 18.6 percent found it to be "somewhat" obscene and vulgar (p. 34). Fifty-nine percent agreed that "there should be a law against sex acts between persons of the same sex" (p. 40).

In light of these attitudes, it is no surprise that the overwhelming majority of Americans interviewed by Levitt and Klassen would not allow homosexual men to hold such positions of public responsibility and moral leadership as court judge (77.2 percent), schoolteacher (76.9 percent), minister (76.6 percent), medical doctor (67.7 percent), and government official (67.4 percent; see p. 33). Specifically, 44.7 percent agreed strongly and 28.8 percent agreed somewhat with the statement, "Homosexuals are dangerous as teachers or youth leaders because they try to get sexually involved with children." (p. 34.) In the last seven years attitudes have, however, changed somewhat. The Gallup Poll of June 17–20, 1977, finds that 65 percent think "homosexuals should not be hired as elementary school teachers" (8 percent, no opinion), 54 percent think they should not be hired as clergy (10 percent, no opinion), and 44 percent think they should not be hired as doctors (12 percent, no opinion).* A growing number believe homosexual persons may hold such sensitive and responsible positions. (See Gallup, "Majority Support," p. 8.) Nonetheless, most Americans continue to view homosexual persons with great disapproval, distrust, repugnance, and fear.

The intense disapproval and fear is reflected in widespread patterns of private discrimination against, and oppression of, homosexual persons. A college student, known to be homosexual, returns to his dormitory room only to find that the football team has ransacked it. A women employee has performed well for a firm over a number of years. Her employer receives a "telephone tip" that she is a lesbian. He calls her in and advises her that company regulations require an investigation. She clears her desk and leaves the office the same day. The employment agency codes a middle-aged man's interview card "HCF" ("high-class fairy"), and the prospective employer knows to say, "No!" At the present time, no state has a law guaranteeing the civil rights of homosexual persons within the private sector, although increasing numbers of counties and municipalities have adopted such laws. As is well known, the voters of Dade County, Florida, repealed a locally enacted civil rights law in June 1977.

Society's intense disapproval and fear of homosexual persons is also reflected in patterns of officially sanctioned public discrimination. For example, homosexual persons are uniquely subject to arrest under sodomy laws. Further, they are subject to arrest under unusual applications of laws against vagrancy, lewd and lascivious conduct, and disorderly conduct. Also, courts regularly rule against lesbian mothers in child custody cases, although courts are notably predisposed under most other circumstances to award the custody of children to the mother.

Behind these formal and informal sanctions lies the reality of social labeling. Many, if not most, heterosexual persons assume that the label "homosexual" describes a "master trait" that governs a person's total personality and behavior. That trait comes to have a negative value so strongly generalized "that people automatically assume that its bearer possesses other undesirable traits allegedly associated with it." (Becker, *Outsiders,* p. 33.) A homosexual person may in

*The 19 states that have repealed or removed so-called "sodomy" statutes are California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Washington, West Virginia, and Wyoming. Arkansas had repealed, but later repealed its repeal.

*The Gallup Poll demonstrates that Americans under 30 years of age are considerably more liberal in attitude toward "the homosexual in U.S. society" than are those over 30, with those 18–24 years old being the most liberal of all and those 50 years old and over being the most conservative of all. (See Gallup, "Majority Support," p. 7, and "Difficult Lot," pp. 5, 6–7, 8.)

fact be well-adjusted or maladjusted, competent or incompetent, reliable or unreliable, religious or irreligious, promiscuous or unpromiscuous; but once she or he is labeled "homosexual," society-at-large loses sight of these and other individualities of attribute. It expects "homosexual" persons to be maladjusted, incompetent, unreliable, irreligious, and promiscuous; and it assumes that they are. To be labeled "homosexual" is to be placed by many people in an excluded deviant class—"a category of misfits who would normally be expected to engage in unacceptable activities and to oppose the rest of the social order." (Erikson, *Wayward Puritans,* p. 197.)

The disapproving, punitive social situation—in both its public and private dimensions—has greatly shaped and influenced the behavior of homosexual persons. In American history there have been countless homosexual judges, schoolteachers, ministers, doctors, government officials, office workers, laborers, and farmers who have performed their duties with distinction. (See Brown, *Familiar Faces, Hidden Lives.*) However, few nonhomosexual persons have been conscious of this fact, for almost all homosexual persons have felt compelled to pass as heterosexual persons—some by marrying, having children, and controlling, denying, or repressing their homosexual feelings; some by marrying and having children while engaging in secret or discreet homosexual behavior; some by remaining single and celibate; some by remaining single and apparently celibate, while engaging in secret or discreet homosexual behavior. The average American with 200 adult acquaintances knows, but does not recognize, at least five or six passing homosexual persons and perhaps as many as twenty. So many succeed in passing unnoticed because the quality of their public lives—whether excellent or ordinary—so little matches the common stereotypes of "the homosexual." People "would never suspect."

Heterosexual persons often presume that homosexuality is the master trait or organizing principle of homosexual persons' lives. However, such is not often the case. With apologies to Freud, the truth of the matter is that most people at most times and in most places are nonsexual. Thus, most homosexual persons, rather than suffer the ruin of such truly central aspects of life as career, security, and respectability, have chosen to hide or renounce their sexual orientation.

Such hiding and renunciation have often taken a heavy toll. Homosexuality is a complex psychosocial orientation that although not central to a person's existence, is nonetheless a basic part of a person's identity and personality. The heterosexually married homosexual person is often incapable of sharing with his or her spouse the levels of deepest affection and intimacy, both spiritual and physical, although he or she may produce offspring. Intercourse, rather than cementing the marriage bond, becomes a source of continuing tension and frustration. The children are shaped and molded by parents able to offer only the shadow of a loving heterosexual relationship. Whether or not the marriage ends in divorce, the results most often are personally and socially damaging.

The celibate homosexual person, too, has often paid a heavy toll—the toll of loneliness and the absence of affection in a culture that has disvalued and denigrated not only homosexuality but also singleness. The celibate homosexual person has often participated in the sad social reality of "American spinsterhood" (in both its male and female varieties). However, whereas society offers the celibate heterosexual person the solace of such spiritual models as Jesus and Paul, society has often made the celibate homosexual person feel that he or she has no spiritual models and must be continually concerned with "silencing the demons within."

Many homosexual persons arrange their lives so as to pass in public but are unwilling or unable to pay the full toll of loneliness, absence of deep affection, and lack of sexual fulfillment. Many homosexual persons are persuaded that public homosexual behavior leads to social damnation but are not persuaded that private homosexual behavior leads to spiritual damnation. Some homosexual persons insist—sometimes pathologically—that they must fulfill their sexual orientation by experiencing a consensual sexual relationship, no matter how fleeting or impersonal. Contrary to stereotype, such homosexual persons as these do not molest children. "Pedophilia," the need for sexual relations with preadolescent children, is a separate and distinct pathology afflicting equally tiny percentages of both heterosexual and homosexual males. (See Schofield, *Sociological Aspects of Homosexuality,* pp. 149–156; Gebhard, et al., *Sex Offenders,* pp. 74–75, 294–297; West, pp. 117–120; Toobert, et al., "Some Factors Related to Pedophilia," p. 279.) Contrary to stereotype, the percentage of passing but active homosexual persons who seduce youths is no higher than the percentage of active heterosexual persons who seduce youths. (See Loraine, *Understanding Homosexuality,* p. 212 and citations there.) Many supposed seductions are actually cases in which homosexual persons have become involved with seductive youths, adolescent "queer-baiters," or teenage prostitutes. (See Gebhard, et al., p. 320; Loraine, p. 212; Reiss, "The Social Integration of Queers and Peers," pp. 102–120; Gerassi, *The Boys of Boise,* pp. 32–36, 62–63; West, p. 116.) Also contrary to stereotype, some passing but active homosexual persons, particularly women, do establish loving, stable relationships with one other person, or with at most several other persons—relationships whose sexuality is carefully camouflaged from the outside world. Single women have traditionally been able to live together without creating undue suspicion, perhaps because society has assumed, until recently, that all "women without men" are asexual. However, many passing but active homosexual persons, under the pressure for secrecy and anonymity, do engage in kinds of quick, casual, impersonal sex that most Americans believe to be wrong for heterosexual as well as for homosexual persons.

From a sociological perspective, society's dictum, "All homosexual behavior, no matter how loving, is always wrong and should be punished," has had a profound, limiting effect on patterns of homosexual behavior. Committed, loving sexual relationships are ordinarily more visible and detectable than either uncommitted, casual affairs or "one-night stands." Most of those who by conscience, desire, need, or compulsion cannot accept the social prohibition of homosexual behavior but who nonetheless fear the social consequences of visibility dare not fall in love. They dare not seek a meaningful relationship. However, many dare to experiment in the shadowy anonymity of such institutions of a part of the

homosexual subculture as "the tearoom" (male), the steambath (male), or the bar (male and female)—all realms where false identities may be offered and quick, undemanding, invisible sex may be available. In these places they learn the values and etiquette of this part of the subculture.

From a sociological perspective, a society that labels all forms of any specific behavior as deviant, illicit, and immoral forces that behavior "underground," and relinquishes any dominant or positive influence in shaping the values of the resultant subculture. (See Becker, pp. 34–39.) Thus, two social consequences of the dictum, "All homosexual behavior, no matter how loving, is always wrong and should be punished," have been (a) the discouragement of any public models of committed, loving homosexual relationships; and (b) the encouragement of a subculture whose experience of casual, uncommitted sex is at odds with a central value of the dominant culture. Ironically, many people consider the existence of "the tearooms," baths, and bars to be proof-positive of homosexual persons' degeneracy. From a sociological perspective, however, the existence of such subculture institutions results not from any intrinsic or absolute evil in homosexual behavior but from the enforcement of a social policy in which all homosexual persons have been marginalized. Society continuously judges whether or not the benefits that accrue from this social policy warrant the consequences. (See Erikson, pp. 5–19.)

In recent years, more and more homosexual persons have decided not to pass. They have decided to "come out of the closet"—out of the margins. They have decided not to hide or renounce their sexual orientation but rather to affirm it. They have sought to exchange "guilt" for "the realization of innocence." (Abbott and Love, *Sappho Was A Right-On Woman,* chs. 1 and 7.) In so doing, they have directly confronted and challenged a fundamental tenet of American sexual mores.

Some have come out defiantly hostile to "the Establishment" and intent on elevating a subculture into a full-blown counterculture.

Others have come out hoping to maintain a position within the dominant culture by talking and reasoning and living in such a way as to persuade society to reassess its values, to abandon its discriminatory practices, and to give public sanction to responsible homosexual relationships.

II. Homosexuality and the Bible: A Re-examination

A. The Historical Context for the Re-examination of Scripture

Nurture and nature combine to produce homosexual persons not only in secular contexts but also in religious. Homosexuality is a phenomenon that occurs inside the Christian church as well as outside it. Many homosexual persons in American society develop their sexual orientation in the context of a Christian home and a wider Christian community between the times of their baptism as infants and confirmation as adolescents.

Among those who go on to pass as heterosexual persons, a large number stay within the church—many becoming officers and lay leaders, a proportionate number becoming ordained professional ministers or priests. Among those who publicly affirm their homosexuality, most leave the church because their "realization of innocence" is incompatible with the church's traditional insistence that homosexual behavior is always sinful. However, an increasing number of those coming out of the margins of society seek to remain within the church, giving personal testimonies of repentance from sin and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior but also affirming as a matter of Christian conscience that some forms of homosexual behavior are both responsible and loving and therefore not sinful.

A new denomination, the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (the MCC), has arisen expressly to fulfill a special Christian ministry of affirmation to the gay community.* The denomination, which now includes over 100 congregations in the United States and five other countries, describes itself as "ecumenical, evangelical, and eucharistic." Groups of self-affirming gay Christians (both known about and closeted) and heterosexual supporters have also formed within such established religious bodies as the Roman Catholic Church, the Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, the United Methodist Church, the Disciples of Christ, the American Baptist Church, the American Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Church in America, the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, the Religious Society of Friends, the Reformed Church in America, the Presbyterian Church in the United States, and The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. The expressed purposes of one such group, Presbyterians for Gay Concerns (formerly called the Presbyterian Gay Caucus), are:

> 1. To explore, study, and appreciate the values of our gay heritage and develop new ministries between the Presbyterian Church and the gay community;
>
> 2. To encourage and aid the development and distribution of biblical and theological resources on homosexuality and alternate lifestyles;
>
> 3. To work within the judicatories of the Presbyterian Church for a heightened consciousness of gay people and their concerns and insights;
>
> 4. To facilitate, by distribution of educational materials and otherwise, the intelligent consideration by Presbyterian judicatories of support for legislation prohibiting discrimination on the basis of affectional and sexual preference and for legislation deleting restrictions on private sexual behavior of consenting adults; and
>
> 5. To cooperate ecumenically with gay caucuses of other denominations and with interdenominational organizations addressing themselves to issues of relations between gay people and the church.

Through various ministries intended to aid the gay person in achieving civil rights, in finding significant fellowship, and in developing a mature, responsible lifestyle and sexual ethic, the MCC and the denominational gay caucuses have entered into the homosexual subculture and have become visible, influential institutions offering alternatives to the bar and the bath.

In 1975, a self-affirming homosexual candidate under care of the Presbytery of New York City presented his

*The word "gay" as used by the homosexual community is an adjective or noun that refers to homosexual orientation but also much more. "Gay" is meant to convey the *total being* of the person. Originally used by heterosexual persons as a derogatory label for homosexual persons, the term has now been claimed by many homosexual persons as a word which describes the full joy of their self-acceptance, variant lifestyle and same-sex love. "Gay" signals acceptance of one's sexuality, comfortability with it, and the integration of it into a wholeness of life which is affirmed to be responsible and well-adjusted.

final parts of trial for ordination.* His exegesis, sermon, and statement of faith were judged to be well done. A lifelong Presbyterian, he possessed impressive potential for Christian leadership in the judgment of the Candidates Committee. He offered moving testimony of repentance from sin and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. However, he also affirmed as a matter of Christian conscience that some homosexual behavior (including his present lifestyle) is responsible and loving and therefore not sinful. The Candidates Committee was uncertain whether this last view was compatible with Form of Government, Chapter XIX, Section 2 (5) (49.025):

> (c) the acceptability of the candidate's views within the confessional standards of the Church;
>
> (d) the candidate's understanding of the import of the vows required for ordination . . . ;
>
> (e) the candidate's commitment to the professional ministry within the discipline of The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

The committee felt unable by itself to rule on whether the standards of the United Presbyterian Church bar ordination for all self-acknowledged, practicing homosexual persons, no matter what pattern their sexual behavior might take and no matter how outstanding other aspects of their personalities and lives might be. While it was not unknown to have a candidate under care who was homosexual, the issue did not previously have the same significance because it is necessary to have a call before one is eligible for ordination, and there had never before been an openly acknowledged homosexual candidate with a call requesting ordination. Although it was considered highly unlikely that this would happen, the candidate under care of the Presbytery of New York City had a valid call to ministry. Desiring that the denomination as a whole address itself to what was believed to be a critical issue, the Candidates Committee recommended to presbytery that it overture the 188th General Assembly (1976) to appoint a special committee to study the matter and to offer definitive guidance. This the Presbytery did at its meeting of November 11, 1975.

Subsequently, on March 20, 1976, the Presbytery of the Palisades overtured the 188th General Assembly (1976) to appoint a committee to offer definitive guidance on the acceptability of self-acknowledged, practicing* homosexual persons as candidates for ordination.

In response to the request of the Presbytery of New York City, the Presbytery of San Francisco overtured the General Assembly not to concur with the Presbytery of New York City but rather to reaffirm that presbytery has the right and the duty to make all judgments with regard to ordination. The Presbyteries of Seattle, Cincinnati, and Wabash Valley also offered overtures in opposition to the request of New York City—all three in one way or another asking the General Assembly to declare in the light of Scripture that the practice of homosexuality is sin and that self-acknowledged, practicing homosexual persons ought not to be ordained.

In response to these overtures, the 188th General Assembly (1976), meeting in Baltimore, Maryland, did reaffirm the declaration of the 182nd General Assembly (1970) that "the practice of homosexuality is sin," and the Baltimore Assembly added that "it would at the present time be injudicious, if not improper, for a presbytery to ordain to the professional ministry of the gospel a person who is an avowed practicing homosexual." However, the Assembly acknowledged that "there is always more light to break forth from the Bible through the work of the Holy Spirit" and therefore directed that a broadly representative task force be established to study "Christian approaches to homosexuality, with special reference to the ordination of avowed practicing homosexuals." (*Minutes,* 1976, Part I, pp. 111–112.)

In fulfillment of the charge given to the task force by the 188th General Assembly (1976), we turn now to begin to address the question, "Is there 'more light to break forth from the Bible through the work of the Holy Spirit' on the subject of homosexuality?"

B. *Old Testament Texts Traditionally Cited with Reference to Homosexuality*

1. Genesis 18–19 and Judges 19–21

a. Genesis 18–19 (including reference to II Peter 2:6–10 and Jude 7)

The Old Testament passage that historically has been most influential on Christians' attitudes toward homosexuality is the account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Gen. 18–19. In ch. 18, Abraham and Sarah welcome three visitors, Yahweh and two accompanying angels, who are accorded royal hospitality. Having received this hospitality, Yahweh announces to Abraham and Sarah that they will have a child when the visitors come back again in the spring. Old Sarah laughs. Then the men set out to continue their journey toward Sodom. "And Abraham went with them to set them on their way. The Lord said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do . . .' " (vs. 16b–17, RSV). God has already decided to punish Sodom. The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great. Their sin—general wickedness, unspecified—is very grave. Thus, the theme of the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah is raised prior to ch. 19.

The announcement of the intention to judge Sodom

*Throughout this paper the terms "self-affirming" and "self-acknowledged" will be used in place of the term "avowed," which appears in the language both of Overture 9 (1976) from the Presbytery of New York City and of the action of the 188th General Assembly (1976), which called for this study. The task force, through its open hearings, has discovered that the term "avowed" leads many people to misconceptions about the attitude and intent of those homosexual candidates known to the Task Force, for "avowed" does suggest an evangelical commitment to one's sexuality that goes far beyond the simple affirmation and acknowledgement of one's self. Presently, a homosexual person who believes that God accepts his or her active sexuality when expressed responsibly is often required by conscience or by circumstance to respond to the concerns that the church and society express about homosexuality. Thus, what begins as a private affirmation may come to public attention. Although all persons might prefer that the matter of sexual orientation remain a relatively private and secondary part of personal identity, public concern about homosexuality focuses public attention on self-affirming, uncamouflaged homosexual persons. However, "self-affirmation" and "self-acknowledgment" should not be confused with "flaunting" or with "proselyting" or with intruding brazenly upon the scruples of others. Rather, "self-affirming" and "self-acknowledged" describe a person's essentially private act, which public concern raises to public consciousness.

*To use the word "practicing" in connection with a homosexual person suggests promiscuity to many people. The task force regrets this connotation and disavows it.

and Gomorrah occasions a dialogue between Abraham and Yahweh. Abraham asks whether righteous people must suffer for the sins of others, and he enters into negotiations with Yahweh. "If there are 50 righteous men in Sodom, will you spare the city?" "Yes." "Well, how about 45?" "Yes." "40?" "Yes." "30?" "Yes." "20?" "Yes." "10?" "Agreed." So the two angels, who are already on their way to Sodom, will punish the city unless ten righteous men are found there.

The two angels arrive in Sodom. Lot sees them and greets them with a cordial hospitality quite like that which Abraham had accorded them. Of course Lot does not recognize them as angels; he thinks of them as men and welcomes them into his house.

At this point, the narrator of the story tells his readers that all the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house. This detail is crucial to the structure of the narrative; for the issue is, are the angels going to find ten righteous men? All the men of Sodom are gathered around. If ten righteous men are not found here, it will be judgment day for Sodom.

The men of Sodom call out to Lot (v. 5): "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them." Verse 5 presumably cites the final specific sin of which all the men of Sodom are guilty—the final example of Sodom's grave wickedness. In traditional exegesis of this passage, "know" (Hebrew *yādă*) has been understood to mean "have sex with." Thus, v. 5 has been understood to describe homosexual behavior.

Although some modern writers have sought to prove that "know" does not have sexual connotations in this passage (see, for example, Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition,* pp. 2–6), few biblical scholars would agree with such an interpretation. The author of ch. 19 was quite aware of the sexual usage of the verb "to know," as can be seen with certainty in v. 8. Granted that 19:5 describes the intention to commit a sexual act, the nature of that act does need precise definition. The traditional "homosexual behavior" is a description that misleads. The demeanor of the Sodomites is manifestly violent. They seek no such thing as a union between consenting adults. Rather, they intend gang-rape.

In interpreting ch. 19, it becomes important to know what cultural meaning the Ancient Near East attached to the violent sexual assault of males by males. Unfortunately, the answer is by no means certain and can be inferred from only a few sources.

Genesis 19:5–8, in which Lot offers his two virgin daughters as sexual substitutes for the two men, and Judges 19:22–24, in which the Ephraimite sojourner offers two women as sexual substitutes for one man, both suggest that the rape of men was viewed by Israel as a worse crime than the rape of women. One obvious reason for this was that males were more highly valued than females. However, another reason might have been that whereas a woman's being sexually penetrated was at least consistent with the culture's basic female gender schema, a man's being penetrated was violently inconsistent with its basic male gender schema. Thus, for a man, being sexually assaulted was an attack not only on his person but also on his essential masculine being.

A third source from which we can infer something of the cultural meaning of male-male intercourse is the Egyptian myth of the Contendings of Horus and Seth. It describes the conflict of the two god-brothers over the throne of Egypt:

> Now afterward, (at) evening time, bed was prepared for them, and they both lay down. But during the night Seth caused his phallus to become stiff and inserted it between Horus's thighs. Then Horus placed his hands between his thighs and received Seth's semen. . . .
>
> [The next day] they both went to the tribunal and stood in the presence of the Great Ennead. They were told: Speak concerning yourselves. Said Seth: Let me be awarded the office of Ruler [may he live, prosper, and be in health], for as to Horus, the one who is standing (trial), I have performed the labor of a male against him. The Ennead let out a loud cry. They spewed and spat at Horus's face. (Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt,* pp. 120–121.)

In this excerpt from a text contemporary with Israel's exodus from Egypt and entry into Canaan, Seth claims the throne on the basis of a homosexual act in which Seth has demonstrated his manliness while Horus, playing the "female" role, has ostensibily been humiliated. The narrative describes a sexual act in which the active partner establishes his masculinity while the passive partner loses his masculinity.

Thus, what little evidence there is suggests that the violent assault in Gen. 19 was a brutal act through which the manliness and power of the Sodomites could be asserted while humiliating and de-masculinizing the foreign guests.

In any event, God's judgment against Sodom is sealed when, as a final act of wickedness, all the men of Sodom storm Lot's home, intent on raping his angelic visitors.

The nature of the wickedness attributed to Sodom in Gen. 19 is further illuminated by two New Testament passages, II Peter 2:6–10 and Jude 7. II Peter 2:7 refers to the "licentiousness" or "debauchery" or "wanton violence" (Greek *âsélgeia*) of the Sodomites. (*Âsélgeia* has overtones of insolence and brutality.) II Peter 2:10 speaks of those who "follow (i.e., indulge) their physical nature in desire that defiles" (Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon,* p. 699) and "treat lordship with contempt." Both verses imply sexual misconduct. However, neither verse specifically describes generalized homosexual behavior. (Many other forms of sexual behavior were, in the opinion of the early church, lawless and defiling.) Indeed, in light both of the overtones of insolence and brutality and of the phrase "treat lordship with contempt," both verses may be interpreted to refer specifically to the Sodomites' sexual assault on the angels.

According to Jude 7, Sodom and Gomorrah had "fornicated" and "gone off after different flesh." A number of interpreters understand the latter phrase to refer to homosexuality (male flesh rather than female flesh). However, other interpreters understand it to refer to the intended rape of the angels (angelic flesh rather than human flesh). Thus, II Peter 2:6–10 and Jude 7 do not offer clear, decisive evidence that the early church understood the sin of Sodom to be homosexual behavior in general rather than the intended rape of angels in particular.

b. JUDGES 19–21

Judges 19–21 is a story set in the period of the tribal league—that is, during the twelfth or eleventh century

B.C., in the days before Samuel and Saul. It concerns a Levite sojourning in the country of Ephraim who has a concubine. She becomes angry with him, walks out, goes home to Bethlehem, and stays there. After four months, the husband decides that he should go and mend fences. He journeys to the home of his father-in-law in Bethlehem, and the father-in-law extends to the Levite extraordinary hospitality. The banqueting goes on and on before finally coming to an end. The Levite then leaves for home with his concubine. It is getting to be dark. They do not have time to go very far, and they must decide whether to spend the night in Jerusalem (which at that time was a Canaanite city) or to go on to some place such as Gibeah or Ramah. They decide it would be much safer to sojourn in the Benjaminite city of Gibeah. When they arrive at Gibeah, they are not greeted with hospitality. Finally, a resident alien from Ephraim comes in from the field and extends them hospitality, whereupon the men of Gibeah come around and demand that the old Ephraimite bring out the Levite so that they may "know" him. The language of Judges 19:22–24 bears a remarkable similarity to that in Gen. 19:4–8. Clearly one of the authors had heard or was looking at the other author's work. Probably the Sodom and Gomorrah story is the older, and the Judges story is dependent for some of its language upon the Genesis story. If so, we have an early commentary on the sin of Gen. 19:5.

In place of the Levite, the host offers the Levite's concubine and his own daughter (two women, again a parallel to the Lot story); but this time there are no angels present to work a miracle (compare Gen. 19:11). So the concubine is pushed out. She is raped throughout the night and in the morning staggers to the doorstep, where she dies. The Levite goes out, picks up the corpse, carries it back to his home, cuts it up into twelve pieces, and sends the pieces throughout the twelve tribes to signal a holy war against Benjamin. Chapters 20 and 21 go on to describe this war. For a while it looks like Benjamin will win, but finally it loses. Only a few Benjaminite warriors are left, and no Benjaminite women. How wives are found for these warriors so that the tribe may continue is yet another lurid story.

Judges 19 describes the same type of sin as Gen. 19. Whatever one decides regarding Gen. 19:4–8 one must also decide regarding Judges 19:22–26. Thus, Judges 19 describes rape. Same-sex rape was intended; opposite-sex rape was actually performed.

From both Gen. 18–19 and Judges 19–21 one learns that rape, whether of males or of females, violates God's justice. From these passages can one discern the attitude of God toward homosexual relationships between consenting adults?

Some would answer this question in the negative. However, others would hold that II Peter 2:6–10 and Jude 7 establish the greater context of the homosexual practice of Sodom in Genesis 19. Those who answer this question in the affirmative hold that the licentiousness *(àsélgeia)* which distressed Lot included other forms of homosexual practice than its more violent form. *Asélgeia* connotes general perversion in certain contexts (see Arndt and Gingrich; Jude 4). Also, those holding this view maintain that the homosexual gang-rape was but one expression of the Sodomites' prior experience of homosexual activity. Philo, a Hellenistic Jewish author, states this understanding explicitly in *On Abraham* (36:135).

2. Deuteronomy 23:17–18 (and also I Kings 14:24, 15:12, 22:46; II Kings 23:7)

DEUT. 23:17–18 (KJV):

> There shall be no *whore (qədēšāh)* of the daughters of Israel, nor a *sodomite (qādēš)* of the sons of Israel. Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore *(zônāh)*, or the price of a dog, into the house of the Lord thy God for any vow: for even both these are abomination unto the Lord thy God. (Emphasis added.)

DEUT. 23:17–18 (RSV):

> There shall be no *cult prostitute (qədēšāh)* of the daughters of Israel, neither shall there be a *cult prostitute (qādēš)* of the sons of Israel. You shall not bring the hire of a harlot, or the wages of a dog, into the house of the Lord your God in payment for any vow; for both of these are an abomination to the Lord your God. (Emphasis added.)

The problem of correctly understanding Deut. 23:17–18, and all of the additionally listed passages from I and II Kings, is the basic problem of how to translate correctly the Hebrew words *qədēšāh* (f.) and *qādēš* (m.). In particular, is the KJV correct in equating *qādēš* with "sodomite" (= "homosexual")?

If one were to translate literally, *qədēšāh* would mean "holy woman" and *qādēš* would mean "holy man," an obvious indication that the persons so designated played cultic roles. The *qədēšāh* was a pagan priestess who, as can be inferred from v. 18, participated in ritual heterosexual intercourse in celebration of the mysterious powers of creation and fertility. (See also Hosea 4:14.) Thus, the RSV translation "cult prostitute" is more accurate than the KJV "whore."

However, what exactly does *qādēš* mean? If the *qədēšāh* was a pagan priestess, logically the *qādēš* was a pagan priest, also associated with a fertility cult. But did he as part of the office, like the *qədēšāh*, play a sexual role? Almost all modern exegetes and translators have assumed so—therefore, the RSV translation "(male) cult prostitute." However, unlike the case of the *qədēšāh*, no textual evidence exists to corrobrate the *qādēš*'s sexual function. Verse 18, which ascribes a sexual function to the *qədēšāh*, does not do so to the *qādēš*. Neither do the cited passages in Kings nor those Ugaritic texts in which the cognate word *qdšm* denotes priests. (See Whitaker, *A Concordance of the Ugaritic Literature*, p. 546.) "The wages of a dog," in Ancient Near Eastern parlance, probably means "the pay of a servant" (see Donner and Röllig, *Kanaanäische und Aramäische Inschriften*, II:190–191), or possibly "the pay of a cultic functionary dressed like a dog" (see Healy, "The Kition Tariffs and the Phoenician Cursive Series," p. 56a and p. 60, footnote 12). In either case, "dog" as applied to a pagan priest would have pejorative overtones. The dog was not a beloved animal in Israel, and "dog" was a term that Israel applied to enemies and the wicked. (McCullough, "Dog," in Buttrick, et al., eds., *Interpreter's Dictionary*, I:862.) However, no evidence exists from which to conclude either that "dog" in Semitic languages had sexual implications or that cultic personnel dressed like dogs functioned sexually. At most, the phrase "the wages of a dog" connotes the pay of a wicked servant of a pagan god.

The Septuagint translation of *qādēš* into Greek for these Old Testament passages offers mixed testimony to

the word's meaning. *Qādēš* in Deut. 23:17 is translated *porneúōn* ("male prostitute"); however, I Kings 15:12 renders *qādēš* as *teletēs* ("initiating priest"), and II Kings 23:7 simply transliterates the plural form as *kadēseím,* thereby avoiding a translation. The Septuagint translators obviously had no fixed tradition of the word's meaning, and *porneúōn* is probably influenced by the rendering of *qədēšāh* in the same verse as *pórnē* ("female prostitute").

Thus, it would appear that the sole evidence for ascribing a sexual function to the *qādēš* is the sexual function of the *qədēšāh.* Nonetheless, if one were to assume with the RSV that the *qādēš* did have a sexual function in a fertility cult, what might that function have been? It is not difficult to imagine a positive role for a heterosexual priest, but it is difficult to imagine what role a homosexual priest might play in a fertility ritual. For this reason, the KJV translation "sodomite" has no contemporary scholarly basis and must be judged a mistranslation.

Deuteronomy 23:17–18 and the additional passages in Kings shed light on God's attitude toward pagan priests and priestesses but not on God's attitude toward homosexual persons.

3. Leviticus 18–20

Leviticus 18, 19, and 20 are legal traditions compiled by the priests of the Jerusalem temple during the later period of the monarchy. They codify portions of the Law of God for Judah, as the priests understood it. The central theme of the chapters is "holiness before the Lord," a state of ritual purity and moral integrity to be maintained by complete separation from the polluting idolatry and immorality of Judah's neighbors. A holy Judah would keep possession of the inherited land. An impure Judah would be vomited out by the land that it had defiled. Therefore, the individual who disobeyed the ritual or moral law endangered the peaceful future of the entire people and had to be punished, usually by death. "So this is a universe in which [people] prosper by conforming to holiness and perish when they deviate from it." (Douglas, *Purity and Danger,* p. 50.)

"Separation from the polluting idolatry and immorality of neighbors" has long been identified as one of the conceptual elements in the priests' understanding of holiness. Such separation helped to guarantee the sanctity of God's unique law—the Ten Commandments.

Another conceptual element of holiness has been identified by Mary Douglas in her anthropological study of the abominations of Leviticus—namely, "the preservation of wholeness and completeness":

(a) Holiness is a whole body. (For example, Lev. 21:17–23, the diseased or maimed cannot serve as priests; Lev. 19:27, men may not shave off the edges of their beards; Lev. 15:1–33, all bodily discharges render a person temporarily impure.)

(b) Holiness is internal peace and social order, with no confusion between what is and what seems to be. (For example, Lev. 19:11, "You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another"; Lev. 19:16, "You shall not go up and down as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand forth against the life of your neighbor . . ."; Lev. 19:18, "You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself. . . .")

(c) Holiness is unmixed classes and categories of creation. (For example, Lev. 18:23, "And you shall not lie with any beast . . .: it is *tebel* (mixing, confusion)"; Lev. 19:19b, "You shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed; nor shall there come upon you a garment of cloth made of two kinds of stuff"; Lev. 20:12, "If a man lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall be put to death; they have committed *tebel* (mixing, confusion)." (See Douglas, pp. 49–54.)

An outstanding example of the priests' application of the last concept—"holiness is unmixed classes and categories of creation"—is the dietary laws of Lev. 11:

(a) Cattle are the principal domesticated animal and meat source for a pastoral people. Thus, by definition they have to be "clean animals." They happen to have cloven hoofs and to chew the cud. From this circumstance, one pastoral people —the Israelites—deduced that God had created a category of "clean animals" meant to include all animals having cloven hoofs and chewing the cud. Now camels, rock badgers, rabbits, and pigs are "mixed animals." They have one attribute but not the other. They do not conform to the classification as defined and are, therefore, "unclean" (vs. 2–8).

(b) "Proper" locomotion in water "requires" scales and fins. Therefore, the Israelites reasoned, God's created category of "clean" water animals consists of those having scales and fins. They may be eaten. Animals who live in water but have no scales and fins violate holiness. They are "unclean" and may not be eaten (vs. 9–12).

Douglas concludes that the Israelites' observance of the dietary laws outlined in Lev. 11 functioned as "signs which at every turn inspired meditation on the oneness, purity and completeness of God." (Douglas, p. 57; for more detail, see pp. 41–57.)

These general observations about holiness in Leviticus illuminate some conceptual categories that help the modern reader better to understand the structure, content, and meaning of Lev. 18 and 20.

Verses 2–5 and 24–30 set the framework for ch. 18: the people of Israel are to remain undefiled by refusing to commit the abominations of which other nations are guilty.

Verses 6–18 forbid various forms of incest. The legislation seeks to preserve the right ordering and integrity of the various marriage units found within the multigenerational extended family, all of whom might live under one roof. A man shall not have sexual relationships with his mother, step-mother, sister, half-sister, granddaughter, aunt, aunt-in-law, daughter-in-law, or sister-in-law. Verse 15 is parallel to 20:12, in which intercourse with one's daughter-in-law is specifically called *tebel* ("mixing" or "confusion"). Verses 17–18 forbid a man's simultaneous marriage to a woman and her daughter or granddaughter or sister. Polygamy apparently was still permissible, but these particular forms were considered incestuous violations of God's intended order for the family.

Verse 19 forbids intercourse with a menstruating women, who is "unclean," that is, "not whole," during the seven days of her discharge.

Verse 20 forbids adultery, which violates the sanctity of the marriage unit, the moral integrity of the covenant relationship between God and the people, and the wholeness of the husband's property. (Compare Ex. 20:17 and also Lev. 20:10.)

Verse 21 forbids child sacrifice, which transgresses both the principle of separation from the polluting idolatry of neighbors and the moral integrity of the covenant. (Child sacrifice involves both idolatry and murder.)

Verse 23 forbids both male and female bestiality, which, as has been noted, is *tebel*—the mixing or confusion of species. The verse is a rare example of legislation addressed not only to the Israelite man but also to the Israelite woman. The "you" of biblical legislation is ordinarily masculine, not feminine.

Verse 22 is, of course, the law relevant to this study. Literally the text reads, "With a male, you (masculine) shall not lie 'lyings with a woman' "; or, more idiomatically, "With a male, you (masculine) shall not have sexual intercourse." Homosexual behavior between consenting male adults is clearly proscribed. Such behavior violates the integrity of primary categories of creation—male and female. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." (Gen. 1:27.)

Verse 29 prescribes a single punishment for all the abominations catalogued in ch. 18—death. As the legislation of ch. 20 makes quite clear, the formula "they shall be put off from among their people" means "they shall be put to death."

Chapter 20 repeats many of the legal concepts found in ch. 18 and adds a few others. Its format, however, emphasizes the punishment to be meted out for each category of crime.

Any man offering children in sacrifice to Molech shall be stoned to death. If the people do not carry out the punishment, God will "cut off" the man and his family from among the people. (Vs. 2–5; compare 18:21.) Any person who turns to mediums and wizards shall be "cut off" (that is, "put to death"). (V. 6.) Any man who curses his father or mother (v. 9), and any person who commits adultery (v. 10; compare 18:20), shall be "put to death." If a man commits incest with his step-mother or his daughter-in-law, both man and woman shall be "put to death." "Their blood is upon them." (Vs. 11–12; compare 18:8, 15.)

Verse 13 repeats the legal precept of 18:22, adding the punishment: "If a man has sexual intercourse with a male, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall be put to death. Their blood is upon them." Homosexual behavior between consenting males is an "abomination" to God, deserving death.

Verse 14 cites the case of a husband who takes his wife's mother as a second wife. (Compare 18:17.) The punishment: all three "shall be burned with fire."

Verses 15–16 deal with male and female bestiality. (Compare 18:23.) All parties shall be "put to death," including the beast.

If a man marries his sister or half-sister, "it is a shameful thing." They shall be "cut off" (that is, "put to death"). (V. 17; compare 18:9.) If a man has sexual intercourse with a menstruating women, they shall be "cut off" (that is, "put to death"). (V. 18; compare 18:19.) If a man commits incest with his aunt, they shall "bear their iniquity" (that is, "be put to death"). (V. 19; compare 18:12–13.) If a man commits incest with his aunt-in-law, they shall die childless (although not a capital punishment, nonetheless an unthinkable destiny). (V. 20 compare 18:14.) Finally, if a man marries his sister-in-law, "it is impurity." They shall have no children (again, not a capital punishment). (V. 21; compare 18:16.)

In conclusion, Lev. 18:22 and 20:13 demonstrate beyond doubt that homosexual behavior between consenting males was a capital crime explicitly forbidden in the ancient priestly legal tradition of Jerusalem. Such behavior was believed to defile the people's holiness before the Lord. It violated the integrity of categories of God's creation—male and female. "Holiness requires that individuals shall conform to the class to which they belong. And holiness requires that different classes of things shall not be confused." (Douglas, p. 53.)

In practice, homosexual behavior between consenting males was apparently quite rare among the Israelites. Nowhere in the historic literature is consenting homosexual behavior mentioned and, most importantly, nowhere in the prophets' denunciations of Israel's sins is homosexual behavior mentioned.

In order to evaluate the importance of Lev. 18–20 for the present deliberations of the United Presbyterian Church, one must address the question, "What do Christians do with Old Testament law and with the Israelite orders of creation in the light of both Jesus Christ and expanding empirical knowledge?" To these critical issues we shall return in Section D, after examining the New Testament texts.

C. *New Testament Texts Traditionally Cited with Reference to Homosexuality*

1. Romans 1:26–27 within the Structure and Themes of the Epistle

Paul's Letter to the Romans "is a presentation of his missionary reflections on the historic possibility of salvation now offered to all [people] in the good news of Jesus Christ. In the light of his eastern apostolate, and especially of the Judaizing crisis, Paul came to realize that man's justification and salvation depended not on the 'deeds of the Law,' but on faith in Christ Jesus, the Son whom the Father's love did not spare. Through faith man shares in the effects of the plan of salvation conceived by the Father and brought to realization in the death and resurrection of Jesus." (Fitzmyer in Brown, et al., eds., *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, paragraph 53:4.)

Almost all commentators interpret 1:18–3:20 as Paul's preliminary statement of the divine judgment merited by both Greek and Jew on the basis of works and in the absence of saving faith in Christ. To the Gentiles God has been revealed as omnipotent and divine Creator through the creation itself (1:18–20). However, in their folly, they have not given God the reverence and thanksgiving that is due. Thus they stand culpable before God. Furthermore, their failure to acknowledge the Creator whose reality they have perceived has led them into vain reasoning, obscured vision, and, most tragically, idolatry (1:21–23). (For the Jewish background of these concepts, compare, for

example, Wisdom of Solomon 13–15.) Instead of worshiping the Creator, they have adored the creature. As a consequence, God has abandoned them to a state of sin, in which their lives are dominated by sexual conduct and other forms of behavior that violate the divine will:

> Therefore, because of their hearts' desires God gave them up to the defilement of their bodies' being shamefully treated among themselves—these who exchanged the truth of God for the lie and offered reverence and service to the creature rather than the Creator (who is blessed forever. Amen!).
>
> For this reason, God gave them up to shameful passions. Their females exchanged sexual relations which accord with nature for those which are contrary to the order of nature; and likewise the males abandoning sexual relations with females which accord with nature, were inflamed with their longing for one another—males committing shameless acts with males and receiving in their own persons the necessary requital for their errant behavior.
>
> And insofar as they did not see fit to have a true knowledge of God, God gave them up to an "unfit" mind and to doing what is improper—they having been filled with every kind of unrighteousness, evil, greed, wickedness; they being full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they being gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent men, proud men, boasters, contrivers of evil, men disobedient to parents; they being foolish, faithless, heartless, merciless. Such ones as these know God's statute that those who practice such things are worthy of death. Yet not only do they do them, but they even approve of those who practice them. (1:24–32; original translation.)

Having delivered this indictment of Gentile behavior, Paul turns his attention in 2:1 to "the man" who would self-righteously pass judgment on that behavior. This man only passes judgment on himself, for he himself is not innocent of such offenses. No one escapes judgment by God's standards (2:1–5).

Some scholars believe "the man" to be a prototype of a pagan moralist. Most recent commentaries suggest, however, that "the man" of 2:1 is identical with the Jewish boaster of 2:17. Paul moves in his thought from the guilt before God of the Gentiles to the guilt before God of the Jews. The law of Moses has not brought righteousness to the Jews. Jews fail to fulfill the law and are therefore as surely condemned for their failure to obey God's will as are the Gentiles. In reality, "all people, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of Sin." (3:9b.)

In a recent paper, George Edwards argues that the interpretation of 1:18–3:20 outlined above misunderstands the function of 1:18–32 within the larger literary unit. He contends that in 1:18–32 Paul does not express his personal criticism of the Gentiles. Rather, he repeats traditional Jewish material reflecting the Jews' opinion of those who are not "elect." Paul does so as a rhetorical device intended to call forth from Jewish-Christian readers some expression of the self-righteous pride that Paul knows still resides in many of their hearts and that Paul intends to destroy in ch. 2. By means of the Jews' own arrogant polemic against the sins of the Gentiles, such as is found in Wisdom of Solomon 13–15, Paul "sets up for the knockout punch" those Jewish-Christians who still measure righteousness by the law, failing to see their own sins against the law. Righteousness does not stem from knowledge of the law! It stems only from faith in Christ. (See Edwards, "Romans 1:26–27.")

In evaluating the function of 1:18–32, the critical question becomes: Does the passage express a view of Gentile sin that Paul accepts as true, even though he finds in it no basis whatsoever for self-satisfaction and judgmentalism; or does the passage express a 'sub-Christian' Jewish rhetoric that Paul by no means endorses? The former seems far more likely than the latter. First, 2:2 states clearly, "We know that the judgment of God *rightly* falls upon those who do such things." (Emphasis added.) Second, 3:9 says "For we (= *I*) *have already charged* that *all* people, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of Sin." (Emphasis added.) Chapter 2:1–3:20 represents Paul's charge that the Jews are under the power of sin. Where, however, if not in 1:18–32, has Paul already charged the Greeks? Chapter 1:18–32 does state a traditional Jewish view of the power of sin in the Gentile world, but Paul also owns the charge as his own. The distinctive element that Paul adds to the Jewish charge is his understanding that in so grim a situation lies no cause for Jewish self-satisfaction and judgmentalism. No one apart from faith in Christ is free from sin's deadly grip.

Having painted in 1:18–3:20 so pessimistic a portrait of all peoples' slavery to sin, Paul proceeds to proclaim the good news: God's righteousness has been manifested apart from the law. The grip that sin and death have held on humankind since Adam's time has been broken. Through the redemption wrought by grace in Christ's death, God justifies the unworthy—Jew and Gentile alike—on the basis of their faith. Such justification profoundly shapes the life of the recipient. Reconciled to God, the person is restored to an abiding peace, hope, and certainty of salvation. Freedom from sin at last! (3:21–5:21.)

Is freedom from sin freedom to sin? Not at all! Through baptism, a person unites with Christ. Through baptism, a person dies to sin and rises to God. Through baptism, the "old self" of selfish desire and passion is transformed and renewed. The reign of sin can be willfully resisted, and the person can turn the self over to righteousness for consecration to holiness. (6:1–23.)

Is freedom from sin freedom from the law of Moses? To be sure! Christians do not serve under the Ten Commandments or under the ceremonial law of the Old Testament. Rather, they serve in "the new life of the Spirit." (7:6.) Prior to learning the law of Moses, persons in the grip of sin do not obey the will of God, but their violation of divine will is born more of ignorance than of active opposition. Upon hearing the law, they learn the divine will but do not receive the power to fulfill it. As a result, their sense of sin is only quickened. Hearing "You shall not covet," they become fully aware that they subject the self to created things rather than to the Creator. Yet they are powerless to break sin's grip. Indeed, sin is able to use the law to heighten covetousness and rebellion. The law itself is good. But for persons without power to fulfill it the law becomes another potent weapon in sin's arsenal. The mind may focus on the law of God, but the flesh remains prey to the law of sin. One does what one does not want to do and does not do what one wants to do. From this agony at the hands of sin and its adopted weapon, the law, the Christian is free. (7:1–25.)

Is freedom from the law of Moses freedom to live according to the flesh? Not at all! Christians live in the Spirit and are led into ever greater sanctification by the Spirit. As such they are children of God released from the death of the flesh. Christians are, to be sure, weak, but the Spirit supports and intercedes. "If God is for us, who is against us?" (v. 31; 8:1–39.)

For life in the Spirit the will of God is no longer expressed in the external law of Moses to which people conform at penalty of death. Rather, it is expressed in the internal "law of the Spirit" (8.2) to which people are transformed by the power of the Spirit itself. And the law of the Spirit is the law of love: "Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." (13:8–10.) Paul exhorts his companions in Christ to present their bodies as an offering to God to be transformed by the renewal of mind. (Compare 1:28–31.) Then they will accept the will of God as proved and will manifest such attributes as humility and charity to the end that evil will be overcome with good. "Be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord." (v. 11; 12:1–21.)

As a pastor, Paul continually felt called upon to help define for his congregations specific forms of expression that the internal law of the Spirit might take. He did not want them mistakenly to follow the old flesh under the illusion that they were following the Spirit. Although Paul is unfamiliar with the particular situation of the Christians in Rome, he nonetheless concludes his letter to them with models for the outworking of the Spirit's law drawn from his general pastoral experience. (12:1–15:13.) For example, because all authority has been instituted by God, the Spirit leads the Christian to be subject to civil authority and to pay all taxes. (13:1–7.) Also, because Christians are free from the external law, the "strong" in the faith quite rightly believe in principle that they may eat anything and that they need not observe any particular religious calendar. However, some Christians are "weak" in their sense of freedom from the law and take offense at the things others eat freely or at the ways in which others observe the calendar. Christians should not pass judgment on one another in these matters. The strong should not despise the weak. Nor should the weak despise the strong. Each will have to give a personal account before God. Meanwhile, "happy is he who has no reason to judge himself for what he approves." (14:22.) Nonetheless, Paul concludes, the law of the Spirit leads the strong not to assert their "rights" but to accommodate their behavior to the scruples of the weak. In the Spirit, freedom is tempered by love of neighbor and is not used to give offense. One may eat "controversial" food in private or among those of equal strength. One ought not to eat it among those of weak conscience. (14:1–15:6.)

In summary, Paul's Letter to the Romans sets forth a systematic exposition of the grip of sin and death over all humankind, Jew and Gentile alike; the liberation from that grip available to all people through faith in Christ; the freedom from the old self and from the law of Moses that redemption brings; the role of baptism and the Spirit in transforming the heart and mind to the inner law of love; and the ways in which the law of love expresses itself both within the Christian community and in relation to the outside world. Within his initial exposition of the grip that sin holds on the Gentile world, Paul cites with approval the Jewish view that Gentiles have exchanged both service to the Creator for service to the self and "the glory of immortal God for an image of the form of mortal man and of birds and four-footed animals and reptiles." (1:25,23.) Symptomatic of this idolatry and of the foolish failure to give recognition to the Creator whom they have perceived is the Gentiles' sexual conduct. They have exchanged heterosexual behavior, which accords with nature, for homosexual behavior, which is contrary to the order of nature.* Yet, awareness of such sin in the life of others can be no basis for self-satisfaction or self-congratulation. All humanity apart from faith in Christ stands unworthy before God.

2. I Corinthians 5–6

Paul himself founded the Christian community in Corinth, a city located on a narrow Greek isthmus that separates the Aegean and Adriatic Seas. Like that of other cities in the area, its population came from widely different social, cultural, and religious backgrounds. During Paul's ministry in Corinth, he had helped to establish within the Christian community an "enthusiastic" life in the Spirit that celebrated freedom from sin, death, the old self, and the law. (See, for example, I Cor. 14.)

After Paul had departed, he received correspondence from the church which indicated that some within the community misunderstood the meaning of the "freedom" that Paul had preached. Some within the body of Christ felt "free" to practice sexual immorality (Greek *porneia*). Indeed, a member of the church had actually married his stepmother (presumably after the death of his father). (5:1.) SUch an act certainly violated Jewish law. (Lev. 18:8, 20:11.) It also violated Roman law. (Conzelmann, *I. Corinthians,* p. 96.) However, Paul's objection to this act is not grounded in law per se. Rather, Paul's objection to all *porneía,* whatever its particular form, is grounded in his concepts of the resurrection of the body, the oneness of the body with Christ, and the sanctifying of the body through the Spirit. (6:13–15, 17, 19.)

Christians do not belong to themselves but through redemption become the servants of a new master—God. (6:19–20.) Justification both establishes freedom (from sin, self, and the law) and limits freedom (to the loving service of God and neighbor—the law of the Spirit). In presenting their bodies to God, Christians are transformed into the body of Christ, into Christ himself. (6:15.) They become one body and one spirit with him. (6:17.) Just as the body of Christ was meant for resurrection and glory and not for *porneía* (sexual immorality), so Christians' bodies are meant for resurrection and glory and not for *porneía.* (6:13–14.) Just as Christ would not join sexually with a prostitute, thereby becoming one flesh with her, so the true Christian would not. (6:15–16.) No, *porneía* is enslavement to sin (6:12); it is not freedom in Christ.

In order to make his doctrine of freedom clearer to the Corinthians, Paul makes a distinction between the Christians' freedom *for* food and their freeom *from porneía.* (6:13–15.) Freedom for food is based on two realities. First, the stomach is transient; it has no existence apart from this world. (6:13.) What happens to

*Paul probably did not know our contemporary distinction between sexual orientation and sexual behavior. Paul probably believed all people to be created for heterosexual behavior.

it is of no lasting consequence. My stomach is not "me." Second, all food is the creation of God. (10:25–26.) All food is permissible. What particular food is eaten is of no lasting consequence. However, the body, the true "me," is not transient; it is destined for resurrection and glory. (6:13–14.) What happens to the body is of lasting importance, and *porneía* (sexual immorality) is the one behavior that is a sin against the body. (6:18.) Therefore, Paul exhorts the Corinthians to shun *porneía,* to discard that aspect of the old self, and to free the body from continuing impurity.

Paul understands *porneía* to be one of the marks of the world of sin that is subject to divine judgment. It characterizes the world the redeemed leave behind when they are baptized. By "leave behind," Paul assures the Corinthians, he does not mean physical withdrawal from the world. Christians must of necessity associate with non-Christians who are sexually immoral or avaricious and robbers or idolaters. (5:9–10.) But by "leave behind," Paul does mean that the Christian community itself should bear new marks of the transforming power of the Spirit. Therefore, "brothers" who are sexually immoral or greedy, robbers, idolaters, revilers, or drunkards—"brothers" who bear old marks of the unsanctified self—should be excluded from the fellowship of the community. (5:9–11, 6–8.) The community must remain pure and holy. (Compare 3:16–17.) In a concrete application of that principle, Paul himself pronounces excommunication on the man who married his stepmother, and he orders the community to cast that man out into the realm of Satan. (5:3–5.)

The attitude that Paul displays toward judgment within the community in 5:1–13 is quite different from the attitude he displays in Romans 14:10–13. The reason is clear. The crisis in Romans 14 is a dispute between Christians who, in Paul's opinion, disagree within the valid limits of Christian conscience. In such a situation Christians should not judge each other. The crisis in I Cor. 5 is one in which Paul encounters behavior that he considers to be characteristic of a life under the reign of sin and uncharacteristic of a life transformed into obedience to the law of the Spirit (that is, to the law of love). In such a situation, corporate holiness requires the maintenance of purity; Christians should judge each other.

In the midst of Paul's discussion of freedom, *porneía,* sanctification, and judgment (chs. 5–6), he inserts two lists of typical old-self vices. They exemplify a catalog form traditionally used in Hellenistic Judaism for citing the marks of paganism. Such lists are usually loose, unsystematic compilations of "typical" evils, allowing for no gradation or nuances. For example, the first list, which has already been cited (5:10–11), admits of no gradation between the idolater and the drunkard; and it acknowledges, of course, no distinction between the drunkard and the alcoholic. The second list (6:9–10) is of particular concern to this study because it includes *malakoí* and *ársenokoítai,* two terms which almost all recent English versions understand to denote homosexual persons.

I Cor. 6:9–11 (RSV):

> Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the immoral *(pórnoi)* nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals (*malakoi* and *ársenokoítai*), nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Many commentators, noting that "inherit" and "kingdom of God" are not typical Pauline vocabulary, suggest that Paul here inserts a standard piece of writing from set Christian tradition. In any event, it is clear what use Paul makes of the list. The vices mark the lives of the unjustified, the untransformed, the non-Christian Gentiles. Indeed, they are vices that had characterized the lives of some Corinthian Christians in the days before their conversion and baptism. (6:11.) However, continuing such behavior, to Paul's way of thinking, is incompatible with the Spirit's law of love and can have no place in the lives of the justified.

What type of person precisely do *malakoí* and *ársenokoítai* designate?

1. a. RSV (1946): "homosexuals" (without differentiating between the two words). b. RSV (1972): "sexual perverts" (without differentiating).

2. Good News: "homosexual perverts" (without differentiating).

3. New English Bible: "[those guilty] of homosexual perversion" (without differentiating).

4. New American Bible: "sodomites" (without differentiating).

5. Jerusalem Bible: "catamites, sodomites" (differentiating between the passive and active partners in male anal intercourse).

6. J. B. Phillips: "the effeminate, the pervert."

7. KJV: "effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind."

8. Goodspeed: "sensual, given to unnatural vice."

As should be evident, the different translations can conjure up very different images to the mind of the reader (and of course each translation can conjure up very different images to the mind of different readers). For example, "homosexuals" can suggest to a modern reader the image "all persons with any type of homosexuality regardless of behavior." "Homosexual perverts" can suggest to the reader well-acquainted with psychological literature the image "those particular homosexual persons who repeatedly express their sexuality in ways that seek to hurt other people." Or to other readers "homosexual perverts" can suggest the image "all homosexual persons who behave in ways that are dirty and depraved" (which can mean for many such readers "all homosexual persons who are sexually active"). The J. B. Phillips translation, "the pervert," and the translation of RSV (1972), "sexual perverts," suggest an even broader image: "all persons, regardless of sexual orientation, who behave in ways that are dirty and depraved." The translation "catamites and sodomites" seems to suggest the image "any men, regardless of basic sexual orientation, who engage with each other in anal intercourse" (a type of behavior that not all active homosexual males practice). The KJV and J. B. Phillips renderings of *malakoí* as "effeminate" doubtless suggest to readers a host of images that may or may not include "homosexual persons." Certainly, however, the KJV did not mean specifically to denote homosexual persons, for in seventeenth century usage "effeminate" was a general term for "those who are weak, soft, dissolute."

Which of these many and varied images, if any, did Paul himself mean to suggest to the readers of his day when he used the words *malakoí* and *ársenokoítai*? KJV, J. B. Phillips, and Goodspeed all represent a translation tradition in which *malakoí* is understood not to have meant specifically "homosexual persons," and for this understanding there is considerable ancient linguistic support. (See Boswell, *Ganymede in Exile,* forthcoming.) *Malakoí,* in first century Greek, has the ordinary meaning "people or things that are soft." By extension, it also serves as a general term for "those who are dissolute, debauched, or of weak moral fiber" (precisely the meaning of KJV's "effeminate"). (See Liddell, et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon,* pp. 1076–1077.) John Boswell of Yale University argues that the texts cited by Bauer's lexicon (tr. by Arndt and Gingrich) in support of the translation "catamite" (pp. 489–490) do not really describe homosexual behavior. Furthermore, argues Boswell, no commentary on I Corinthians by an early Greek father associates any such meaning as "homosexual persons" with *malakoí.* Boswell concludes that the KJV is correct in reading *malakoí* as a general term for "the 'soft' and decadent." He would himself translate it "the dissolute." However, not all scholars will be able to accept Boswell's view of *malakoí.* They believe that Bauer's lexicon offers texts giving adequate support for translating *malakoí* as "catamite" and that such texts have value for understanding Paul's discussion of homosexuality.

As for *ársenokoítai,* recent English translations unanimously associate the word with one form or another of homosexual behavior. The word itself is compounded of *-koítai* ("ones (m.) who 'go to bed'") and *árseno-* ("male" or "masculine"). Thus, the compound word, if construed literally, could mean either "ones (m.) who 'go to bed' with men"—in which case *árseno-* designates the object of the action—or else "males who 'go to bed'"—in which case *árseno-* describes the subject of the action. Compare the use of the compound form gyneco- ("female" or "feminine") in English. In the word "gynecology," gyneco- is objective—that is, the compound word, if construed literally, means "study *of* females," not "study *by* females." Yet, in the word "gynecocracy," gyneco- is subjective—that is, the compound word, if construed literally, means "government *by* females," not "government *over* females."

Obviously, all modern translators have understood *ársenokoítai* to mean "ones (m.) who 'go to bed' with men." Against this view, John Boswell argues that Greek authors made a careful distinction between the twin compound forms *ársseno-* and *árrseno-*. Their usages were distinctive: *ársseno-* was always subjective or adjectival; *árrseno-* was always objective.* Thus, *árrenokoítai* means "ones (m.) who 'go to bed' with men," and *ársenokoítai* means "males who 'go to bed'." In support of his linguistic analysis, Boswell cites the writings of the early Greek fathers, not one of whom found in I Cor. 6:9 a reference to homosexual persons. St. John Chrysostom, who detested homosexual behavior, used 125 different words to describe homosexual persons; but he never used *ársenokoítai* in that particular sense even though, as we know from his commentaries, he was well acquainted with I Corinthians. He did use the word *ársenokoítai;* but he used it, says Boswell, to designate male prostitutes who service females. Boswell concludes that a correct translation of the first century use of *ársenokoítai* would be "male prostitutes" and that a correct translation for I Cor. 6:9 would be "neither the dissolute *(malakoí)* nor male prostitutes *(ársenokoítai).*" In Boswell's translation any specific reference to homosexual persons disappears altogether from Paul's list. However, some believe that Boswell's argument against the traditional translation of *ársenokoítai* fails in part because it relies on the Greek fathers of a later period. The standard lexicons provide adequate textual bases for translating *ársenokoítes* as "male homosexual, pederast, sodomite." (Bauer's lexicon.) The intent of I Cor. 6:9–10, according to Conzelmann and Grosheide, is to designate "passive" and "active" homosexual persons.

Boswell's study has not yet appeared in print, although it is scheduled for publication within the year. Before other scholars have had the opportunity to evaluate Boswell's work, it would be inappropriate to accept his interpretations of *ársenokoítai* and *malakoí* as in any way conclusive.

To bring to a close the discussion of I Cor. 5–6, three observations should be made. First, a serious challenge has been raised to the understanding that Paul made specific reference to homosexual persons in the list of 6:9–10. Second, if *ársenokoítai* does as a matter of fact refer specifically to some kind of homosexual person, the term is sufficiently rare and obscure to make Paul's precise meaning difficult to determine. Did he intend to designate all homosexual persons, homosexual perverts, homosexual prostitutes, sodomites, promiscuous homosexual persons, anyone (whether heterosexual or homosexual) who engages in any form of homosexual behavior, all of the above, or none of the above? At this distance in both time and culture, we cannot answer such a question with confidence. Third, whether or not *ársenokoítai* denotes a type of homosexual person, Romans 1:26–27 states clearly that Paul believed the exchange of heterosexual behavior for homosexual behavior to be a mark of the old pagan self. Therefore, whether or not Paul specifically included that particular form of behavior on his list in 6:9–10, one can only infer that he would have wanted to include it on any complete list of pagan vices to be shunned by Christians.

3. I Timothy 1:1–11

Some scholars continue to argue that Paul wrote I Timothy (as explicitly claimed in 1:1–2); however, others consider I Timothy, along with II Timothy and Titus, to have been composed pseudonymously by a person who lived one or two generations after Paul.

Regardless of authorship, I Timothy is primarily concerned with the issues of heresy and church order. The specific beliefs and attitudes of the heretics are not clearly stated, but they seem to fall within the frame of Judaizing Gnosticism—that is, within a frame combining legalistic asceticism with theological speculation based on "foolish" mythological stories. (1:3–7.) The author contrasts these emphases with the proper aim of Chris-

*The standard explanation among classics scholars is that *ársseno-* and *árrseno-* are dialectal variants rather than distinct semantic variants.

tian teaching: "love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith." (1:5.) "Good conscience" here apparently means a conscience properly formed by correct ethical instruction.

"The law is good." (1:8.) Quoting a phrase from Paul (Romans 7:16, 12), the author emphasizes that his opposition to the heretics is not a challenge to the intrinsic goodness of the law that God gave to Moses. However, Christians must understand the proper use of the law. The law is not laid down for the upright person. Rather, it is laid down for the lawless and the disobedient. A catalog of vices then characterizes the types of lawless people the author has in mind: "the ungodly and sinners, the unholy and profane, murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, other kinds of murderers, the sexually immoral, *ársenokoítai,* kidnappers, liars, perjurers—and whatever else goes against sound teaching." (Does the author mean to imply that if the heretics find it necessary to teach law, then the people of their community must be of such character?) As in I Cor. 6:9–10, *ársenokoítai* rank among those who are not the upright, those who are not properly within the Christian community. As in I Cor. 6:9–10, how is the word properly to be translated? What connotations did the word have within the first and second century Hellenistic world?

"And whatever else goes against sound teaching, according to the gospel of the majesty of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted." (1:10b–11.) The Pastoral Epistles emphasize the Spirit's work through "sound" instruction communicated to ordinary Christians by the officers of the church. (See also I Tim. 4:1–3; 6:2b–5; II Tim. 1:13–14, 4:3–4; Titus 1:7–2:10.) By implication (I Tim. 1:10–11, 5), the actions of a Christian, although not conformed to the norm of the law, are nonetheless conformed to another norm—the correct and traditional teaching of the church as passed through its authoritative officers. Sound teaching is the guarantor of "sincere" faith, "good" conscience, and "pure" heart; and from these three attributes issues active love. For the Pastoral Epistles the key to sanctification is sound teaching enthusiastically received.

D. *How to Read the Bible?: Problems and Models of Biblical Authority and Interpretation*

The exegetical survey has shown that scholarship is not unanimous about the weight and meaning to be assigned to these biblical texts. It is possible to summarize these findings in at least two ways.

One approach holds that three of the texts address the particular issue of homosexual behavior between consenting males: Lev. 18:22, Lev. 20:13, and Romans 1:26–27. One addresses the particular issue of homosexual behavior between consenting females: Romans 1:26–27. Two other texts probably refer to persons associated with some type of homosexual behavior: I Cor. 6:9–10 and I Tim. 1:9–10. Both texts, in any case, shed light on attitudes within the early church toward sins identified with the "old pagan self." Finally, a number of other texts traditionally cited with reference to homosexuality have no particular bearing on homosexual behavior between consenting adults: Gen. 19:4–9, II Peter 2:6–10, Jude 7, Judges 19:22–26, Deut. 23:17–18, I Kings 14:24, 15:12, 22:46, II Kings 23:7. Therefore, according to this view, in seeking light from Scripture to apply to the contemporary issue of homosexuality, the United Presbyterian Church must deal particularly (although, of course, by no means exclusively) with the Levitical law codes and with the apostle Paul.

Another approach holds that all the texts cited above have direct bearing on the issue of homosexuality, except Deut. 23:17–18, I Kings 14:24, 15:12, 22:46, and II Kings 23:7. Three texts address the issue of homosexual behavior between consenting males: Lev. 18:22, Lev. 20:13, and Romans 1:26–27. Romans 1:26–27 also addresses the issue of homosexual behavior between consenting females. Two other texts—I Cor. 6:9–10 and I Tim. 1:9–10—are relevant to homosexual behavior in general, although a distinction is implied between the active and passive partners in male homosexual intercourse. Genesis 19:4–9 and Judges 19:22–26 address at least the issue of homosexual rape. II Peter 2:6–10 and Jude 7 also help to establish that Gen. 19:4–9 presupposes general homosexual activity at Sodom. Therefore, according to this view, while disregarding the texts in Deuteronomy and I and II Kings, the United Presbyterian Church must seek light from Scripture to apply to the contemporary issue of homosexuality from all of the other passages discussed above (as well as other texts not discussed above, including Gen. 1–3 and Matt. 19:1–12).

1. Problems of Biblical Authority and Interpretation

In reading the central texts in the larger context of the Bible, a number of Christians (both homosexual and heterosexual) have raised a series of earnest and sincere questions that challenge the church to reconsider one aspect or another of its traditional, universally negative, attitude toward homosexual behavior. (For a recent example of questions proposed by a Presbyterian New Testament scholar, see Doughty, "Homosexuality and Obedience to the Gospel." A number of the New Testament questions that follow are his or are similar to his.) *We are not at this point passing judgment on the merit of the following questions. We simply list them.* Differing approaches to the answering of these questions will be found in Models A through D which follow.

(1) Leviticus and the letters of Paul were written 2600 and 1900 years ago in societies far different from our own. What weight and moral authority ought they to have in evaluating our own society's psychosocial phenomenon of homosexualities, the complexity of which is now gaining empirical definition?

(2) The ancient Israelites understood heterosexual marriage to be God's only created order for human sexuality (Gen. 1–2), although such marriage was not necessarily monogamous (Deut. 21:15–17, Judges 8:30). Contemporary social scientists understand humans to be born without a predetermined sexual orientation. Are the ancient view and the modern view compatible?

(3) The author of Job emphasized that the mysteries of God's activities as Creator cannot be completely comprehended by the human mind. (Chs. 38–41.) No doctrine of creation can fully state the truth about the Creator. Does the church's knowledge of God's work as

Creator continue to grow as time and experience lead to new glimpses of the Creator's plan?

(4) Homosexual behavior violated the Israelites' male gender schema. (Lev. 18:22, 20:13.) Treating one's wife as an equal violated their male gender schema. (Num. 5:11–31, Judges 19:22–26.) Remaining single violated their male gender schema. (Compare Jer. 16:1–4.) By what criteria does the Christian decide that one part of the Israelites' male gender schema reflects God's eternal plan itself and the others only a time-conditioned human understanding of God's plan?

(5) Homosexual behavior between consenting males and heterosexual intercourse between a husband and a menstruating wife were both capital crimes in ancient Judah. (Lev. 18:19, 22; 20:13, 18.) Both violated the Israelites' understanding of holiness. By what criteria does the Christian decide that one law reflects God's eternal will itself and the other only a time-conditioned human understanding of God's will?

(6) Paul believed that the Mosaic law had become a weapon in the arsenal of sin. (Romans 7.) Can the Mosaic law be a sure guide to God's will for the Christian life?

(7) Does Paul in Romans 1:18–32 quote with approval a traditional Jewish understanding that the Gentiles' exchange of heterosexual behavior for homosexual behavior is sin? Or does he cite traditional Jewish teaching about Gentile sin, so that when his Jewish-Christian readers nod assent to such self-satisfied, judgmental rhetoric he may then forcefully remind them of their sole dependence upon faith for justification before God? (See Edwards, "Romans 1:26–27.")

(8) Paul understood the self-satisfied condemnation of other persons' sins to be itself sin. (Romans 2:1–3:20.) Are expressions of antihomosexual attitudes by some Christians examples of such sin?

(9) Let us assume that Paul did accept the Jewish view that pagans, out of unfit minds and consciences, had consciously chosen to replace heterosexual behavior with homosexual behavior. (Romans 1:26–28.) Today, most homosexual persons have made no such conscious choice. Does Romans 1:26–28 speak authoritatively of these people?

(10) Let us assume that Paul did accept the Jewish view that the pagans' homosexual behavior was always motivated by shameful, self-serving passion. (Romans 1:24–27.) Paul also believed that pagans' heterosexual marriages were motivated by self-serving passion. (I Thess. 4:3–5.) Was Paul being polemic? Was all pagan sexuality motivated by lust? Is all homosexuality today, including that which is found among Christians, motivated by lust? Should one ask, "What does homosexuality mean in the context of an individual person's life?" before assuming "shameful, self-serving passion" as the universal answer?

(11) Paul understood this created world to be in bondage and decay. (Rom. 8:19–22.) Therefore, he did not believe that the "form of this world," including the pattern of heterosexual marriage, could be regarded as an unquestioned guide for Christian life. (I Cor. 7:25–31.) Paul's guide for the Christian life was the "new creation" (II Cor. 5:16–17), which is "faith working through love" (Gal. 6:15, 5:6). Such faith working through love can transform a self-serving married heterosexuality (part of the old creation) into an honoring, self-giving married heterosexuality (part of the new creation). (I Thess. 4:3–5.) Can faith working through love transform a self-serving homosexuality (part of the old creation) into an honoring, self-giving homosexuality (part of the new creation)?

(12) Paul saw a loving, faithful, permanent heterosexual marriage as the Christian's alternative to sexual immorality. (I Cor. 7:2.) Is a loving, faithful, permanent heterosexual marriage the heterosexual Christian's alternative to sexual immorality and a loving, faithful, permanent homosexual relationship the homosexual Christian's alternative to sexual immorality?

(13) Paul cataloged the gifts of the Spirit—that is, the marks of sanctification. They are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Gal. 5:22–23.) Paul classified homosexual behavior as *porneía* (sexual immorality), a work of the flesh—that is, as a mark of sin. (I Cor. 5–6, Gal. 5:19.) Today, how should the Christian community evaluate the life of a Christian who radiates love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—and is homosexual?

(14) In matters of the freedom of Christian conscience, Paul urged Christians not to judge each other. "Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. . . . So each of us shall give account of himself to God." (Romans 14:10, 12.) Paul did not consider homosexual behavior to be a matter of Christian conscience. He believed all immoral sexual behavior to be motivated by lust and destructive to the body. Does the situation change if Christians discover that some homosexual behavior is motivated by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? May such homosexual behavior be considered a matter of the freedom of Christian conscience, for which the individual should be accountable only to God?

(15) For Paul, the Jewish gender schema of male dominance over females had no salvation significance. In Christ, there is neither male or female (Gal. 3:27–28.) For Paul, the cultural difference between Jew and Greek had no salvation significance. (Ibid.) For Paul, the class difference between slave and free had no salvation significance. (Ibid.) Because these earthly estates had no salvation significance, Paul, the "liberal" theologian, could give "conservative" sociological counsel to Christians. He advised Jews, Greeks, slaves, free, males, and females to remain Jews, Greeks, slaves, free, males, and females after conversion—that is, to maintain whatever earthly estate and cultural role they had had when redeemed. (I Cor. 7:17–24; 11:3–15.) Although these particular earthly distinctions (gender, nation, class) have no salvation significance, does the Christian maintain that the earthly distinction between one sexual orientation and another has salvation significance? Paul counseled women, Greeks, and slaves to receive sanctification within their given estate. If Paul were to understand that many homosexualities in our society are given estates, would he counsel those particular homosexual persons to receive sanctification outside their given estate rather than within it?

(16) The Pastoral Epistles emphasize that the key to sanctification is correct teaching enthusiastically received.

> I Tim. 2:9–15 (RSV): . . . women should adorn themselves modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly attire but by good deeds, as befits women who profess religion. Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet woman will be saved through bearing children, if *they continue* in faith and love and holiness, with modesty. (*. . .* reading with the Greek text as per RSV footnote.)

Does the United Presbyterian Church believe that this passage from I Timothy is correct teaching to which the sanctifying Spirit conforms the ordinary Christian woman? If the church through the dynamic Spirit has been led to a new understanding of what it means in the sight of the Creator God to be female and male, is it possible that the church is being led by the dynamic Spirit to a new understanding of what it means in the sight of the Creator God to be heterosexual and homosexual?

(17) In the absence of a direct word from the Lord to illuminate a given ethical situation, Paul felt free to offer his own ethical counsel informed, as he believed it to be, by the Spirit. (I Cor. 7:12, 25, 39–40.) In the absence of any direct word from Jesus in the Gospels on the matter of homosexuality, is the church free to offer its own ethical counsel informed, as it hopes it to be, by the Spirit?

2. Models of Biblical Authority and Interpretation

For the United Presbyterian Church to answer such earnest, sincere, and profound questions is difficult. The church is by no means of one mind on the subject of biblical authority and interpretation—the basic issue that underlies all of the questions. Indeed, the church is not even of two minds. We have arrived at a time and place in our denomination's confessional history in which the views on biblical authority and interpretation have become so diverse that discussion is not so much dialogue as decalogue!

Presbyterian tradition has always had a high view of scriptural authority. At many places in our Book of Confessions, in our Book of Order, and in common use, the Scriptures and the Word of God seem identical. At the same time, Presbyterian tradition has maintained a distinction between the Word of God—Jesus Christ—and the book that through the help of the Holy Spirit, reveals the mind of Christ. We believe, in faith, that there is no contradiction between the Word of God as Scripture and the Word of God as Jesus Christ, but often in the church's history we have seen contradictions in our understandings of them.

Indispensable to any reading of the Bible is faith, and faith requires us to live as if our interpretation of Scripture were fully dependable and trustworthy. Yet, even though we are all instructed and led by the same confessional and constitutional standards, there are, as a matter of fact, within our church a variety of methods of biblical interpretation and a spectrum of opinions about what it means to be faithful in one's apprehension of the Word of God. God's Word is one. However, human perceptions of that Word are many, and no one should assume that any one system of understanding Scripture possesses all objective truth.

Such a pluralistic situation is not unhealthy for the church. Theological controversy has been the catalyst for some of the most profound innovations and reaffirmations in Christian history. Such a situation does, however, demand patience and generosity of spirit. It demands from all parties a willingness to overcome stereotypes and fears that are irrational and dishonest. It demands from all parties a clear, yet humble, articulation of underlying presuppositions and principles and a consistent, yet loving, application of those presuppositions to the dilemma that confronts us. It demands from all parties careful listening and risk-filled openness both to the Spirit of discovery and to the Spirit of correction.

As the task force has studied, listened, debated, and prayed, it has found that there are four theological models that together represent rather comprehensively the various approaches found within the United Presbyterian Church to the subject of homosexuality. Each model begins with statements about biblical authority and about the proper interpretation and use of Scripture. Each embraces doctrinal convictions about creation, sanctification, and justification. Each incorporates an understanding of moral law. Each evaluates the role of experience in informing and supporting a position of conscience within the confessional tradition. Each presupposes a particular relationship between Word and Spirit.

Model A. The Word in Scripture is objective truth whose author is God, and God's gift to us of the Spirit gives us the faith to accept and believe that Word. When doubt, uncertainty, or subjectivity arises, the scriptural Word provides the objective standard by which to discriminate between the Spirit's true guidance and merely human opinions and beliefs.

Model B. No disagreement exists between the Word in Scripture and the Word present in the world through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit both confirms the essential truth of Scripture and helps us see beyond the literary and cultural forms in which that truth was expressed to the objective truth of Jesus Christ, the Word of God. The fact that the Bible is in some way conditioned by language, thought forms, and literary fashions of the places and times at which it was written is of no account to the eyes of faith, which by the Spirit discern the perfection with which God is revealed in Scripture as Creator and Redeemer. In adopting the biblical canon, the church recognized the objective standard by which its experience of Word and Spirit should be judged. Thus, Word and Spirit agree, and the Word in Scripture provides the norm by which the church discerns the Spirit in human experience.

Model C. No basic disagreement exists between Scripture and the Word present in the world through the Holy Spirit, but there is an ongoing dialectic between them. Scripture acts within the church to help define Word and Spirit; and the Spirit acts within the church to help illumine Jesus Christ, who is Word of God and Living Lord, through the media of Scripture and human experience. In determining the biblical canon the church satisfied its need for the normative function of Scripture,

but it also recognized that the canon was not self-evident. That the Bible was conditioned by human experience and history is an essential part of its glory as the witness without parallel to the revelation of the Creating and Redeeming God. Yet, because the Bible was conditioned by human experience and history, the Spirit not only is illumined by the Word in Scripture but also illumines the Word in Scripture. Therefore, while Jesus Christ as the Word of God and the Spirit agree as one, the interplay of Scripture and of the Spirit-acting-within-the-church provide the dialectic through which the church and its individual members learn most nearly to discern the Word of God in Scripture and in the world and to proclaim that Word.

Model D. Jesus Christ as the Word of God is objective truth, but we cannot know him fully and perfectly, whether through Scripture, through the Spirit, or through Scripture and the Spirit in dialogue. All knowledge of Christ is approximate. Scripture is the primary authoritative witness to Christ. However, Scripture is not absolutely authoritative, and it contains much that is unessential to Christian faith. Personal religious experience is a secondary witness to Christ. However, such experience, too, is not absolutely authoritative. As we struggle toward an ever fuller, ever more perfect knowledge of Jesus Christ as the Word of God in Scripture and in the world, we turn to the Spirit to confirm our interpretations. Yet we realize that here, too, knowledge is limited. We cannot discern the Spirit fully and perfectly. However, those elements in life that guide us most nearly to the discerning of the Spirit and to the objective truth of Christ are the principle of God as active love, creating, responding to need, and liberating; the dialogical process of the community's continuous reflection on the meaning of Jesus Christ; and the community's experience of God as the one who bears with us in times of suffering and oppression and who underlies our times of joy.

The task force is aware that the four models which follow do not represent all positions within the church and that variations can be made in each of them. We are aware that none are definitive. United Presbyterians who identify with each position can and must learn from United Presbyterians who identify with other positions. Furthermore, we recognize that the application of theological principles to a concrete ethical problem is a difficult process and that persons who accept the same set of principles may not agree on its application. We also recognize that persons whose orientation is homosexual identify with each of these models.

What follows, then, is a preliminary and tentative attempt to outline four models of biblical authority and faith. They do not delimit the full range of concern within the church, but they do reflect the testimony that the task force received as we sought to discover the attitudes and beliefs present within our church. We present them here in order that United Presbyterians may more fully appreciate the confessional range which exists within the church and may, through that understanding, more purposefully strive for clearer focusing of issues, greater precision of thought, and deeper humility of spirit—as together we face the emotion-laden issue of homosexuality within our church.

a. Model A

(1) Presuppositions and Informing Principles:*

(a) The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are *"the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice."* (As per the ordination and commissioning vow in *The Book of Common Worship*, 1946, pp. 227, 246, 253, 259; emphasis added.)

(b) "The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), *the author thereof* . . ." (The Westminster Confession of Faith (C), I.4, (6.004); emphasis added.)

(c) "The *whole counsel of God*, concerning *all* things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which *nothing at any time is to be added*, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men." (C, from I.6, (6.006); emphasis added.)

(d) "This good and almighty God created all things, both visible and invisible, by his co-eternal Word, and preserves them by his co-eternal Spirit. . . . Now concerning man, Scripture says that in the beginning he was made good according to the image and likeness of God; that God placed him in Paradise and made all things subject to him. . . . *Moreover, God gave him a wife* and blessed them." (The Second Helvetic Confession (SH), from VII, (parts of 5.032, 5.034); emphasis added.)

(e) "They who are effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are further *sanctified*, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, by his Word and Spirit dwelling in them: *the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified;* and they more and more quickened and strengthened, in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." (C, XIII.1, (6.067); emphasis added.)

(f) "*The moral law* [The Ten Commandments] *doth forever bind all*, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof. . . . Neither doth Christ in the gospel any way dissolve, but much strengthen, this obligation." (C, XIX.5, (6.097); emphasis added.)

(g) Question: "What is required in the Seventh Commandment?" Answer: ". . . the preservation of our own and our neighbor's chastity, in heart, speech, and behavior." Question: "What is forbidden in the Seventh Commandment?" Answer: ". . . all unchaste thoughts, words, and actions." (The Shorter Catechism (SC), Q.71–72, (7.071–2).)

(h) Question: "Can those who do not turn to God from their ungrateful, impenitent life be saved?" Answer: "Certainly not! Scripture says, 'Surely you know that the unjust will never come into possession of the kingdom of God. Make no mistake: no fornicator or idolater, none who are guilty either of adultery *or of homosexual perversion*, no thieves or grabbers or drunkards or slanders or swindlers, will possess the kingdom of God.' " (The Heidelberg Catechism (H), Q. 87, (4.087); emphasis added.)

(i) WE MUST NOT JUDGE RASHLY OR PREMATURELY. Hence we must be very careful not to judge before the time, nor undertake to exclude, reject or cut off those whom the Lord does not want to have excluded or rejected, and those whom we cannot eliminate without loss to the Church. *On the other hand, we must be vigilant lest while the pious snore the wicked gain ground and do harm to the Church.*" (SH, from Ch. XVII, (5.140); emphasis added.)

(j) "Church censures are necessary for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren; for deterring of others from like offenses; for purging out of that leaven which might infect the whole lump; for vindicating the honor of Christ, and the holy profession of the gospel; and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the Church, if they should suffer his covenant, and the seals thereof, to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders." (C, XXX.3, (6.156).)

(2) Application of the Presuppositions and Principles:

*The authors cited at the beginning of each model would not necessarily endorse the overall structure of the model or its specific application to the issue of homosexuality. Their words are included because they have articulated well one particular theological principle held by those who do identify with the overall structure of the model and its specific application.

The absolute authority of an infallible Scripture is, for Christians, unquestionable. When God directly inspired Scripture, God anticipated and included all knowledge necessary for human salvation. God spoke in full knowledge of the nature of homosexuality, and God spoke very clearly about the way the church should deal with it. No new revelation that is supposedly from the Spirit can ever contradict what God has already said in Scripture.

The Bible teaches that sexual love should be expressed only within heterosexual marriage. Therefore, in accordance with God's word as found in Paul and Leviticus, the church should plainly label all homosexual behavior as sin and should warn that all who refuse to repent of their homosexual practice are excluded from salvation. Sexually active homosexual persons need to be born again through repentant faith in Christ. Those who are outside the church should not be admitted unless they turn from sin and follow Christ. Those who are inside the church should be censured and disciplined—both that they may find true forgiveness and salvation in Christ and that the church may be kept free from impurity. All people sin—the sanctified and unsanctified alike. However, the sanctified are filled with remorse and, by God's grace, are quickened and strengthened to the practice of holiness. We should pray that the unsanctified may experience a deep sense of sin and turn to God in repentance!

b. MODEL B

(1) Presuppositions and Informing Principles:

(a) The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, *the ultimate rule of faith and practice.*

(b) "The one sufficient revelation of God is Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate, to whom the Holy Spirit bears unique and authoritative witness through the Holy Scriptures, which are received and obeyed as the word of God written. The Scriptures are not a witness among others, but *the witness without parallel.*" (The Confession of 1967 (C-67), from I.C.2., (9.27); emphasis added.)

(c) "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: *unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men.* Nevertheless we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spririt of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word. . . ." (C, from I.6, (6.006); emphasis added.)

(d) "The Supreme Judge, by whom all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture." (C, I.10, (6.010).)

(e) "Therefore the Spirit, promised to us, has not the task of inventing new and unheard-of revelations, or of forging a new kind of doctrine, to lead us away from the received doctrine of the gospel, but of sealing our minds with that very doctrine which is commended by the gospel. . . . If any spirit, passing over the wisdom of God's Word, foists another doctrine upon us, he justly deserves to be suspected of vanity and lying. (Gal. 1:6–9.) What then? Since 'Satan disguises himself as an angel of light' (II Cor. 11:14), what authority will the Spirit have among us, unless he be discerned by a most certain mark? . . . He is the Author of the Scriptures: he cannot vary and differ from himself." (Calvin, *Institutes,* from I.ix.1–2, pp. 94–95.)

(f) ". . .The Scriptures, given under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, are nevertheless the words of men, conditioned by the language, thought forms, and literary fashions of the places and times at which they were written. They reflect views of life, history, and the cosmos which were then current. The church, therefore, has an obligation to approach the Scriptures with literary and historical understanding. As God has spoken his word in diverse cultural situations, the church is confident that he will continue to speak *through the Scriptures* in a changing world and in every form of human culture." (C-67, from I.C.2 (9.29); emphasis added.)

(g) The Word of God is spoken also through the tradition of the church, experiences in the world, and knowledge acquired in the secular disciplines. Valuable truth is found in these sources. However, the Bible remains the ultimate norm, always testing the validity of what is heard in tradition, experience, and the secular disciplines.

(h) "How . . . shall we ever attain certainty and confidence in our personal and church activity if we do not stand on solid Biblical ground? It is not our heart that determines our course, but God's Word. But who in this day has any proper understanding of the need for scriptural proof? How often we hear innumerable arguments 'from life' and 'from experience' put forward as the basis for most crucial decisions, but the argument of Scripture is missing. And this authority would perhaps point in exactly the opposite direction." (Bonhoeffer, *Life Together,* p. 55.)

(i) Question: "How did God create man?" Answer: "God created man male and female, after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures." (SC, Q. 10, (7.010).)

(j) Question: "What is sanctification?" Answer: "Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness." (SC, Q. 35, (7.035).)

(k) "This sanctification is throughout in the whole man, yet imperfect in this life: there abideth still some remnants of corruption in every part, whence ariseth a continual and irreconcilable war, the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. In which war, *although the remaining corruption for a time may much prevail, yet,* through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, *the regenerate part doth overcome:* and so the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (C, XIII, 2–3, (6.068–9); emphasis added.)

(l) "[The law] is the best instrument for [believers] to learn more thoroughly each day the nature of the Lord's will. . . . It is as if some servant, already prepared with all earnestness of heart to commend himself to his master, must search out and observe his master's ways more carefully in order to conform and accommodate himself to them . . . no man has heretofore attained to such wisdom as to be unable, from the daily instruction of the law, to make fresh progress toward a purer knowledge of the divine will . . . [and] by frequent meditation upon it to be aroused to obedience, be strengthened in it, and be drawn back from the slippery path of transgression." (Calvin, *Institutes,* from II.vii.12, pp. 360–61.)

(m) "Although true believers be not under the law as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified or condemned, yet is it of great use to them, as well as to others, in that, as a rule of life, informing them of the will of God and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly; discovering also the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts, and lives; so as, examining themselves thereby, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against sin; together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and the perfection of his obedience . . . Neither are the forementioned uses of the law contrary to the grace of the gospel, but do sweetly comply with it; the Spirit of Christ subduing and enabling the will of man to do that freely and cheerfully which the will of God, revealed in the law, requireth to be done." (C, from XIX.6–7(6.098–9).)

(n) "It will be a long time before men produce a doctrine or social order equal to that of the Ten Commandments, for they are beyond human power to fulfill. . . . These are not trifles of men but the commandments of the most high God, who watches over them with great earnestness, who vents his wrath upon those who despise them, and, on the contrary, abundantly rewards those who keep them. Where men consider this and take it to heart, there will arise a spontaneous impulse and desire gladly to do God's will. Therefore it is not without reason that the Old Testament commands men to write the Ten Commandments on every wall and corner, and even on their garments . . . we are to keep them incessantly before our eyes and constantly in our memory, and practice them in all our works and ways." (Luther, *Large Catechism,* from first Part, paragraphs 317, 330–331, in Tappert, ed., pp. 408, 410.)

(o) "'*You shall not commit adultery.*' . . . Inasmuch as this commandment is concerned specifically with the estate of marriage and gives occasion to speak of it, let us carefully note, first, how highly God honors and glorifies the married life, sanctioning and protecting it by his commandment. . . . Significantly he established it as the first of all institutions, and he created man and woman differently (as is evident) not for lewdness but to be true to each other, be fruitful, beget children, and support and bring them

up to the glory of God. . . . Married life is no matter for jest or idle curiosity, but it is a glorious institution and an object of God's serious concern." (Luther, *Large Catechism,* from First Part, paragraphs 206–208, in Tappert, ed., p. 393.)

(p) "The purpose of [the seventh] commandment is: because God loves modesty and purity, all uncleanness must be far from us. To sum up, then: we should not become defiled with any filth or lustful intemperance of the flesh. To this corresponds the affirmative commandment that we chastely and continently regulate all parts of our life." (Calvin, *Institutes,* from II.viii.41, p. 405.)

(q) "To have our master unavoidably in Jesus Christ means that we are subject to a command, in face of which there can be neither subterfuge nor excuse. . . . It will surprise us how frequently the Messianic challenge to faith is asserted as a challenge to obedience. . . . When we remember this we shall be on our guard against thinking that the commanding, ordering, or lawgiving of the Old Testament belongs specifically to the Old Testament, and confusing it with the *nomos* [law] of the Jews against which Paul contends in Romans and Galatians. In these epistles Paul demonstrates the impotence of the Law for righteousness in God's sight. But the Law to which he refers is the commandment as it is heard unspiritually and without Christ. It is the commandment as it is heard without hearing the command within the commandment, without a fear and love for God the commander. . . . Paul himself stood under this Law, when he regarded and described himself as the servant and captive and bondman of Jesus Christ. . . . In spite of the Reformers' dialectic of Law and Gospel, we can and must regard the whole possibility of our participation in God's revelation under the familiar concept of the divine Law. The Law speaks to us the command within the commandment. It demands that we should fear and love God. Therefore its purpose is not only to instruct and direct, to judge and to terrify. It is also to comfort, to give us hope and joy and help, to give us the very presence of God Himself in the act in which He Himself is ours, in which He binds Himself to us to save us." (Barth, *Church Dogmatics,* I:2:272–274.)

(r) "The urge for the adventure of freedom is fully as powerful as that for security, and Biblical doctrine brings it into especially close connection with the very essence of sin. . . . But the Word of God is first of all a taming of this insubordinate, egoistic desire for freedom. For it is concerned with establishing the sovereignty of God, with the obedience of faith, with the imprisoning of human reason by obedience to Christ, with validating the unconditional authority of God. The Gospel came into the world as the obedience-commanding message of the dominion of God. But the human heart with its egoistic desire for freedom asserts itself even here—where the gospel is accepted as well as where it is rejected. The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians shows us how the Christian community from its beginnings had to hold off this false desire for freedom: individualistic enthusiasm . . . is as old as the church itself. . . . The individualistic enthusiast . . . insists that everything depends on the free rule of the Spirit. 'The Spirit bloweth where it listeth'—hence there is nothing fixed, nothing divinely given, no rule and authority, no established doctrine and institution. Nothing is binding but the free, ruling Spirit of God, who enlightens everyone, when and how He pleases." (Brunner, *Truth As Encounter,* p. 74.)

(s) "*God alone is lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in any thing contrary to his Word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship.* So that to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commandments out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience . . . They who, upon pretense of Christian liberty, do practice any sin, or cherish any lust, do thereby destroy the end of Christian liberty; which is that, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." (C, XX.2–3 (6.101–2); emphasis added.)

(t) ". . . exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." (Heb. 3:13, RSV.) ". . . if a man is overtaken in any trespass . . . restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Look to yourself, lest you too be tempted." (Gal. 6:1, RSV.)

(2) Application of the Presuppositions and Principles:

Model B attributes greater complexity than does Model A to the interplay of God, biblical author, culture, Spirit, and reader. Accordingly, the application of its underlying assumptions to the problem of homosexuality becomes more complex and subtle.

Paul correctly understood that justification and union with Christ are accompanied by the individual gift of the Spirit and sanctification. The old personality is progressively transformed into a new being in Christ. Paul also correctly understood that the commandments are fulfilled in the "law of the Spirit." However, one should not mistakenly conclude from that truth that the Ten Commandments, the moral law derived from them, and many other general biblical-ethical principles have ceased to be signposts toward God's will for modern Christians. On the contrary, faithfulness to biblical-moral principles discerned by the illumination of the Spirit is a goal toward which the process of sanctification moves Christians. As they experience joyful contact with the wise and loving direction of God through the Spirit's illumination of the word, Christians are freed from the confinement of a binding legalism.

The law becomes a "weapon in the arsenal of sin" only if the flesh misuses it to lead a person more deeply into either disobedience or a self-righteous legalism. However, when "the daily instruction of the law" leads to "fresh progress toward a purer knowledge of the divine will," the law becomes a wholly beneficial instrument of the Spirit, convicting us of our need for further moral growth and guiding us in discovering what it means concretely to obey God. We are not guided by codebook laws or abstract moral principles, but by a person, the Holy Spirit. The Spirit uses the objective standard of the word, which the Spirit itself has inspired, to show us what it means to love and obey God in new situations so that we do not follow ourselves or some other spirit in opposition to God.

Paul understood the ultimate cause of homosexual behavior to be humankind's turning from grateful worship of the true God to ultimate concern for counterfeit gods. Homosexual behavior was a physical emblem of substituting worship of the creature for worship of the Creator. Admittedly, Paul did not himself understand how complex and masked the causes of homosexuality, all rooted in the fallen creation, can be. There are some homosexual persons today who do not evidence willful rebellion against God and whose sexual behavior is not an emblem of idolatry. Their homosexuality may be an unfortunate and unchosen consequence both of the generally fallen nature of society and of the sin residual in a church not fully sanctified. Their homosexuality may be expressed in caring ways, reflecting an intention to model love.

Nonetheless, homosexuality, however unchosen, that expresses itself in overt genital behavior, however caring, inevitably breaks the harmony of God's pattern for sexual love displayed in Scripture. The Bible sets forth a positive, family-oriented sexual ethic, which is God's eternal will for humanity and which is timelessly beneficial to the human community. Thus it is necessary to view the biblical understanding of homosexuality in the light of the biblical understanding of human sexuality. The opening chapters of Genesis establish the presuppositions for human sexuality that determine God's judgment on Sodom, the Levitical laws, and Pauline theology.

Rather than giving primacy to nature, humankind, or history, Genesis reveals God as the foundational biblical presupposition: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (1:1.) It is God who speaks crea-

tion into existence. It is God who brings cosmos out of chaos. It is God who gives form and order to the world; systematically light is separated from darkness; dry land is separated from the waters; vegetation and animals are created "after their kind"; and humankind is created male and female. When God creates and orders all things, they are pronounced "good." They conform to the divine will.

For our understanding of human sexuality, the creation of humankind as male and female is crucial. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." (1:27.) Here we learn that we are created as male *or* female and male *and* female. (See Barth, *Church Dogmatics,* III.4.) Humankind is created with gender distinction, male or female, and humankind is created in community as male and female. Living distinctly as male or female and living together in community as male and female are necessary for the full expression of the image of God, since God embraces our sexual polarities. Thus, when God creates us in God's image, God neither creates a single man nor a single woman. God also neither creates two females nor two males. Both male and female polarities are created together, and together in community they represent the divine image in the world.

Furthermore, the sexual relation between man and woman is clearly separated from their creation in the image of God. A special word of blessing is therefore reserved for this: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." (1:28.) The creation of male and female is not primarily for procreation; human sexual relations are an extension of creation as male and female, rather than the ground for it.

The opening chapter of Genesis, then, establishes the priority of God over humankind, the goodness of creation, the divine ordering of humankind as male and female, and the necessity for both together to represent the full image of God in the world.

In Genesis 2 the single male is created to care for the garden and to live under the limit of God's command. The latter is expressed in the prohibition against eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (2:17.) It is not good, however, for the single man to be alone. The resolution of this inadequacy is in the creation of a helper "fit for him" (2:18), and this helper is woman (2:22). She too is a direct creation of God. She too fully shares human nature. Consistent with Genesis 1, male loneliness is not satisfied in the creation of a second male. Thus, man and woman are both similar and supplementary to each other.

As in Genesis 1, humankind is created as male and female to live together in community. This is quickly vitiated in the disaster of the "fall" (Gen. 3) where, separated from God, they are separated from each other and go into hiding (3:7). The swift judgment of God ensues. Conflict in human sexuality results (3:16), as does conflict between the man and the earth (3:17–19). All is fallen. All stands under the curse.

What then may we conclude from the opening chapters of Genesis? Humankind is created within the order of male and female and under the order of God's commandment. Humankind is also gifted with the freedom to break that order and violate that commandment. The seeds of this disruption are sown in the "fall" and are represented by the tension between the sexes and their alienation from nature. From creation and the fall we learn that our sexuality is a powerful drive which can either build and beautify the human community, if properly channeled, or rend and destroy it, if improperly directed. In inspiring the Bible, the Holy Spirit anticipated the danger to humanity posed by the proliferation of various styles and models of sexuality unrelated to a heterosexual family structure and, therefore, clearly stated the Creator's design as a guide and warning. God created humankind as male and female and sanctioned a *man* and a *woman* to live together to provide each other help and companionship and to procreate. When the Spirit led the early Christian community to free itself from time-conditioned elements of Jewish law (Acts 10–15), the Spirit did not bring before the church any active homosexual believers bearing supernatural gifts of the Spirit; and the apostles continued to warn against genital sexual expression outside the boundaries of heterosexual marriage.

We may, therefore, be certain that all homosexual behavior is part of humankind's fall from the divine intention. No such behavior can become an alternative to sexual immorality, for it is itself by definition sexual immorality. No such behavior can become a matter of free Christian conscience, for the sanctifying Spirit frees the conscience from those human "doctrines and commandments" which are contrary to God's word. No such behavior can become acceptable Christian behavior through "awakened social consciousness." And any argument that it can which is based on the model of change in women's social status within the church is falsely reasoned. For however one interprets the roles of women in I Tim. 2, modern practice does conform with the roles of women in Rom. 16 and Phil. 4. Yet in all of Scripture nothing supports the opinion that practicing homosexual persons have a valid role within the Christian church. No, homosexual behavior can at best express only love that remains nonetheless impure, gentleness that remains nonetheless disobedient, and caring that remains nonetheless uncentered on the will of God. Homosexual behavior can at best signal only the woeful incompleteness of a sanctification somewhat begun.

These words are written not in condemnation or condescension. Heterosexual Christians must acknowledge and confess full participation, whether conscious or unconscious, in the social processes and forces that create homosexual persons. Homosexual behavior cannot be explained away simply as a "pagan" vice. Homosexual behavior also arises from within the very heart of an imperfectly sanctified church with many "remnants of corruption." Christians cognizant of imperfection and of participation in the fallenness of humanity cannot but empathize with the human predicament of those created by society, including the church, to be homosexual. By such measure as Christians respond to homosexual persons not with compassion and mercy but with harrassment, discrimination, and oppression; by such measure as Christians respond to ho-

mosexual persons not with an attitude of shared sinfulness but with patronizing condescension—by such measure we confirm our own lack of sanctification and condemn ourselves. We cannot absolve our own guilt before God by passing judgment on our offspring. In trying, we but increase the power of sin within the church.

What then ought to be the attitude of the heterosexual Christian toward the sexually active homosexual Christian who is a member of the United Presbyterian Church? Above all, one of humility, empathy, and compassion. Aware of one's own imperfect sanctification, aware of one's own inner war of the flesh with the Spirit, the heterosexual Christian must seek to understand the depth of commitment to Christ that the homosexual person professes, must search for marks of the transforming Spirit that may be visible in the many other aspects of the person's life, and if such marks are not present, must challenge the person to radical conversion. Does the homosexual behavior stem from an insufficiently formed but basically transformed Christian conscience? If so, then the community should lovingly pray for the ongoing sanctification and transformation of the lives of all members to the end that "the regenerate part" in each "having overcome," all may "chastely and continently" regulate their lives. In addition, concerned members of the community should humbly but honestly share their convictions and concerns with the active homosexual person in a faithful corporate ministry of the preached Word of God. In particular, they should share their concern for the influence of his or her overt behavior on other members of the community. Does the homosexual behavior actually stem from a stubborn and willful disobedience to the perceived Word of God? If so, then the community should lovingly but firmly admonish and discipline the person in accordance with Matt. 18:15–17. In either case, the community should also seek to guide the homosexual person into psychotherapy, pastoral counseling, or some other form of healing ministry so that the person may find joy either in celibacy or in reorientation to an acceptable heterosexual lifestyle.

What ought to be the attitude of Christians toward the active, known-about homosexual person who asks to be confirmed, or baptized and confirmed, within the United Presbyterian Church? In answer to this question, the underlying principles of Model B might lead in either of two directions. The question that is addressed to prospective members is, "Do you intend to be (Jesus Christ's) disciple, to obey his word and to show his love?" One might argue that no active homosexual candidate for confirmation who had been properly interviewed and instructed by a session could faithfully answer "I do." It is one situation for a Christian person to become aware of and come to terms with a homosexual orientation after baptism and confirmation. In such a case, homosexual behavior is less likely to lie at the root of sin in the person's life. But it is quite a different situation for a person to have become aware of and to have come to terms with a homosexual orientation before seeking baptism and confirmation, or confirmation. In such a case, a responsible session would insist that the person acknowledge all overt homosexual behavior to be opposed to the will of God before proceeding to confirmation.

On the other hand, one might argue that repentance is a basic turning over of a person's life to God and does not necessitate the prior understanding and detailed confession of the full dimensions of sin in the person's life. Repentance requires only the *general yet firm intention to conquer the old self, whatever one may subsequently discover that self to have been.* The session should try to determine whether or not homosexual behavior is really so fundamental a part of sin in the context of the person's personality that repentance must necessarily include prior confession of that particular sin. If it is not, then welcoming into the church a sexually active homosexual person who truly intends to be Christ's disciple, to show forth his love, and to obey his word (whatever she or he may subsequently learn that to be) may be a necessary first step toward a sanctification that brings a personal realization of the sin in homosexual behavior. The session must, of course, share with the person its own understanding that homosexual behavior violates the will of God and must continue to counsel with the homosexual member. Yet it may be the case that only after having been welcomed into the community can such a person come to the grace either of continence or of reorientation to heterosexuality.

c. Model C

(1) Presuppositions and Informing Principles:

(a) "The one sufficient revelation of God is Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate, to whom the Holy Spirit bears unique and authoritative witness through the Holy Scriptures, which are received and obeyed as the word of God written. The Scriptures are not a witness among others, but the witness without parallel." (C-67, from I.C.2, (9.27).)

(b) "The demand that the Bible should be read and understood and expounded historically is . . . obviously justified and can never be taken too seriously. The Bible itself posits this demand: even where it appeals expressly to divine commissionings and promptings, in its actual composition it is everywhere a human word, and this human word is obviously intended to be taken seriously and read and understood and expounded as such. To do anything else would be to miss the reality of the Bible and therefore the Bible itself as the witness of revelation. The demand for a 'historical' understanding of the Bible necessarily means, in content, that we have to take it for what it undoubtedly is and is meant to be: the human speech uttered by specific men at specific times in a specific situation, in a specific language and with a specific intention. . . . As truly as Jesus died on the cross, as Lazarus died in Jn. 11, as the lame were lame, as the blind were blind, as the hungry at the feeding of the five thousand were hungry, as the sea on which Jesus walked was a lake many fathoms deep: so, too, the prophets and apostles as such, even in their office, even in their function as witnesses, even in the act of writing down their witness, were real, historical men as we are, and therefore sinful in their action, and capable and actually guilty of error in their spoken and written word." (Barth, *Church Dogmatics,* I:2:464, 528–9.)

(c) "The Bible is to be interpreted in the light of its witness to *God's work of reconciliation in Christ.*" (C-67, from I.C.2, (9.29); emphasis added.)

(d) The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as *the Word of God written* are the *principal rule of faith and practice.*

(e) As in the life of the early church, so in the life of the later church, Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord, is the Living Word, who continues to guide, instruct, and nurture his church through the Holy Spirit. The Living Word is heard *as the word of God spoken* within the church's inner dialogue, within the church's experience of the world, and within the church's conversations with the secular disciplines. *It is the secondary rule of faith and practice.* The word of God spoken, given under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is nevertheless received as the words of people, conditioned by the language, culture, thought forms, and literary fashions of the places and times at which it is encountered.

(f) In no area of doctrine has the church received and does the church continually receive so much Word of God spoken as in our growing understanding of God's work as Creator. "Scientific attempts are continuously being made to calculate the age of the universe and *the process of development* through which it has be-

come what it now is. The appearance of the solar system and the earth, the evolution of life to its highest form—man—the movement of man himself from a primitive animal existence to high levels of culture and civilization: none of these can be understood any longer in terms of the idea of *static structure*. The concepts of *development, process, evolution, history* have become the all-prevailing patterns of thought . . . we are not at the end of the process but only somewhere in its intermediate stages . . . every phase of the world-process will be seen as an expression of God's *continuing* activity, ever moving forward toward his *ultimate* objective. In every moment and every event God is working in and with his creation, creating his kingdom through time; and we live in the midst of this process. . . . Some of the biblical writers, most notably Second Isaiah, directly express this conception of a God continuously working creatively through history toward the realization of his long established purposes:

. . . .
The former things I declared of old,
  they went forth from my mouth and I made them known;
  then suddenly I did them and they came to pass . . .
From this time forth I make you hear new things,
  hidden things which you have not known.
They are created now, not long ago;
  before today you have never heard of them.'
Isaiah 48:3, 6–7."

(Kaufman, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 259–60, 261, 262, 263–4; emphasis added.)

(g) "During the billions of years before mankind, or even life, had appeared, God was preparing the conditions which would make possible the emergence of free and creative spirits who could enter into community with him. . . . God created man to work along with him in further creativity. . . . The appropriate response to God's goodness—as manifested in his creation of the world and man—is not merely gratitude: it is further creation of new goodness by man. The proper response to the order of God's creation is not merely intellectual appropriation: it is creation of original order by man. The fitting response to the beauty of God's world is not simply appreciation: it is further creation of fresh forms of the beautiful." (Kaufman, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 262, 298.)

(h) "We cannot ask the question, what *is* the Holy Spirit?—a Greek sort of question—but only the biblical question, what does the Holy Spirit *do?* What does he bring about? What does he change? We cannot consider the Holy Spirit in terms of his essence, only in terms of his action. We can and should say about the Holy Spirit what he does to us." (Sölle, *The Truth Is Concrete*, p. 62; emphasis added.)

(i) "And the voice came to [Peter] again a second time, 'What God has cleansed, you must not call common.'" (Acts 10:15, RSV.)

(j) "'As I [Peter] began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on [Cornelius and his household] just as on us at the beginning. . . . If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?' When [the circumcision party] heard this they were silenced. And they glorified God, saying, 'Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life.'" (Acts 11:15, 17–18, RSV.)

(k) "The reconciling work of Jesus was the supreme crisis in the life of mankind. His cross and resurrection become personal crisis and present hope for men when the gospel is proclaimed and believed. *In this experience the Spirit brings God's forgiveness to men, moves them to respond in faith, repentance, and obedience, and initiates the new life in Christ. The new life takes shape in a community in which men know that God loves and accepts them in spite of what they are. They therefore accept themselves and love others, knowing that no man has any ground on which to stand except God's grace.* The new life does not release a man from conflict with unbelief, pride, lust, fear. He still has to struggle with disheartening difficulties and problems. Nevertheless, as he matures in love and faithfulness in his life with Christ, he lives in freedom and good cheer, bearing witness on good days and evil days, confident that the new life is pleasing to God and helpful to others. The new life finds its direction in the life of Jesus, his deeds and words, his struggles against temptation, his compassion, his anger, and his willingness to suffer death. The teaching of apostles and prophets guides men in living this life, and the Christian community nurtures and equips them for their ministries." (C-67, from I.C.1, (9.21–24); emphasis added.)

(l) "Unless we are prepared to say that the history of the church from subapostolic times onwards is a history of defection from the original perfection of the primal Christian community, we have to face the fact that an analysis of Christian ethics involves a kind of running conversation between the New Testament, on the one hand, and our situation, as heirs of the New Testament, on the other. . . . It is the office of theology to analyze and to work out the terms of the running conversation between the Scriptures and ourselves." (Lehmann, *Ethics in a Christian Context*, pp. 29, 31–32.)

(m) "God *claims* us for His love, for His generous giving. . . . *You* cannot say what it means to love here and now; *He* alone can tell you what this means for you at this moment. . . . God is always bidding us do some particular thing, something which cannot be done at any other time, something quite new. God's Command does not vary in *intention*, but it varies in *content*, according to the conditions with which it deals. . . . It is conceivable that a case might arise in which, in order to obey the Divine Command, one might have to act 'against the law'. . . . The order of creation cannot be revoked, the idea of marriage as the ethical law of God . . . It is an unalterable fact that the Divine Command can only be discovered *through* this law, and not by ignoring it. The other truth, however, is equally important, namely, that the existence of this universal law relieves no one of the trouble of discovering for himself what God's Command means for *him*, and, finally, that no one can teach another person what God demands from him in this situation, not even in matters connected with marriage. For above all 'orders,' even above the order of creation, stands the will of God, which here and now requires nothing of me save that I should meet my neighbour in the spirit of responsible love. But no universal law can anticipate what this means in a world confused and corrupted by sin." (Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, pp. 116, 117, 134, 354, 355; emphasis is the author's.)

(n) "The interplay of objective norms, the 'cloud of witnesses' as expressed in Scripture, church tradition, and present church teaching, are good, reliable, and trustworthy norms, and most of the time they can serve to judge the spirits. It is with fear and trembling that we would stand over against these norms, but they are nevertheless not absolute, either individually or collectively. They are only formal norms, and therefore can only be secondary, proximate norms. They cannot exhaust the possibilities of the New Creations of the Spirit. Formal norms in their interplay together can give us some guidelines from past experience, but they cannot dictate all that is possible with God . . . . there is a point where all appeal to models, examples, and traditions fails, where man is alone in his own reality before God and must decide what God's Word is for him in the act of his own conscience . . . . what God's Word is, is always concrete and personal. It is not abstract knowledge, but concrete relation, which discloses to man in his existential situation what he must be and do. We may set up norms and formulas which are very useful, and, in our historical situation in the church community, we may even have to pronounce upon the conscience of others, to judge this conscience as wrongheaded and misguided. But even here there is a limit. We can make a relative judgment. We cannot judge as God judges the other person. Therefore, Christian judgment should be one of dialogue and persuasion, never of coercion of the conscience of another. If he is not persuaded, if he is sure that he must still take a stand contrary to ours, then we must respect this conscience even if we do not share in it." (Ruether, *The Church Against Itself*, pp. 227, 119–120.)

(o) "Freedom from the law in the process of sanctification is the increasing freedom from the commanding form of the law. But it is also freedom from its particular content. Specific laws, expressing the experience and wisdom of the past, are not only helpful, they are also oppressive, because they cannot meet the ever concrete, ever new, ever unique situation. Freedom from the law is the power to judge the given situation in the light of the Spiritual Presence [i.e., the Spirit of God] and to decide upon adequate action, which is often in seeming contradiction to the law. This is what is meant when the spirit of the law is contrasted with its letter ([in] Paul) or when the Spirit-determined self is empowered to write a new and better law than Moses ([in] Luther) . . . ." (Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, III:232.)

(p) "The problem of sexual and erotic morality is one of the most profound, difficult and metaphysical problems of ethics. Sexual morality is particularly dominated by social conventions. The most intimate aspect of personality, which simply cannot be judged from outside and of which the person is shy of speaking to anyone at all, is the most organized and regulated socially. This is due to the fact that sexual life results in the birth of children, the continuation of the human race. Something intimately personal and absolutely nonsocial has social consequences. This is why sex life provides the field for particularly tragic conflicts between the individual and society, for a fatal clash between personal and social destinies. In the life of the community what is personal and intimate becomes socially regulated and the individual has to answer to society for feelings and actions which have no reference to it and have a social bearing in their consequences only. The result is that no other sphere of life is so vitiated by hypocrisy and cowardice. In their judgments about sex people are terrorized by society and particularly cowardly and insincere. . . . The hidden life of sex and sexual love is a mystery of two persons. No one and nothing third can judge between them or even perceive its reality.

It is the most intimate and individual aspect of human personality, which it does not want to show to others and sometimes conceals even from itself." (Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man*, pp. 232, 236.)

(q) "Christian morality, interpreted not legalistically but in the inner, spiritual sense, means acquisition of spiritual power in all things. Christian virtue is not compliance to norm and duty but strength and power. . . . the struggle against evil . . . consists in the creative realization of the good and the transformation of evil into good, rather than in the mere destruction of evil . . . . passions are the material which may be transformed into a higher qualitative content of life. Without passions, without the unconscious element in life and without creativeness, human virtue is dry and deadly dull. The Fathers of the Church themselves say sometimes that passions may become virtues. This shows that in the struggle with passions it is wrong to adopt the exclusively negative point of view and practice solely the negative asceticism. It is necessary to attain positive qualitative states into which passions will enter in an enlightened, transfigured, sublimated form instead of being uprooted and destroyed. This applies in the first instance to the most fatal of the fallen man's passions—that of sex. . . . The sublimation or transfiguration of passions means that a passion is purified from lust and that a free creative element enters into it. . . . Creativeness is generous and sacrificial, it means giving one's powers, while lust wants everything for itself, is greedy, insatiable and vampirish. True love gives strength to the loved one, while love-lust vampirically absorbs another person's strength." (Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man*, pp. 115, 133, 137, 140.)

(r) "The personalization of sexuality challenges both the traditional Christian doctrine that sex be limited to procreation and also the libertine view that reduces sex to physiological relief without depth communication and relationship. . . . It demands a morality based on the laws of careful friendship that would judge as immoral not only much of what passes for sophisticated liberty in modern society but also much that passed for legitimate married relations in traditional society. It demands that both partners to any relationship look upon each other as beloved persons to whose total welfare and personal growth each is committed. Such a concept does not fit itself easily into traditional laws. It demands a higher, not a lower, standard by which to judge the immorality or morality of sexual relations. The personalization of sexuality must also throw into question the norm of heterosexuality as the sole norm of healthy sexual relations. . . . If sex/love is centered primarily on communion between two persons rather than on biologistic concepts of procreative complementarity, then the love of two persons of the same sex need be no less than that of two persons of the opposite sex. Nor need their experience of ecstatic bodily communion be less valuable." (Ruether, in Bianchi and Ruether, eds., *From Machismo to Mutuality*, pp. 81–83.)

(s) A small but growing number of Christians firmly believe that they have encountered homosexual "Corneliuses." (See (i) and (j) above.)

(2) Application of the Presuppositions and Principles:

That God creates is the firm testimony of Scripture. How and with what design God creates is the testimony first of Scripture but second and more fully of the ongoing Word of God spoken as humankind's capacity for comprehension and knowledge expands. We continue to perceive with awe and wonder more and more of that which lies behind the veil shrouding the mysteries of God's creative work. And now we come to comprehend a new dimension to humanity's unique place within our planet's orders of animal life. We are biologically coded for sex but not for gender identity or role. We are biologically equipped for sexual performance but are incompletely coded for when, where, how, and with whom to perform. God has provided humankind with the physical framework for existence, but as part of the gift of freedom God has made us co-creators of our own womanhood and manhood. God has given us the freedom to determine what it means to be male, what it means to be female, what it means to be a sexual being. In an unpublished paper recently written for a theological seminary faculty dialogue, Professor George Kehm says:

> . . . anyone who knows that sexual identity does not automatically coincide with biological sex in human beings, and that it is largely a product of how one has been regarded and treated by others during early childhood, cannot think that sexual behavior is the result of the combined operation of a male or a female nature and an obedient or perverted will, as St. Paul seems to have supposed.
>
> Abel Jeannier's careful and profound analysis of a variety of modern approaches to human sexuality led him to conclude that maleness and femaleness cannot be defined in terms of specific characteristics exhibited by individuals falling into one class or the other. Rather, he concluded, maleness and femaleness are continually being defined in the historical "dialogue" that goes on as men and women encounter each other. What "defines" maleness and femaleness are not some fixed characteristics belonging to differently sexed bodies as such, but the *interpretations* that arise from the way persons mutually constitute each other in their encounters with persons of oppositely-sexed bodies. The history of such interpretations goes on, of course. The "definitive" truth about maleness and femaleness can never be reached this side of the eschaton. We must face up to the fact that our present concepts and even the biblical concepts about the differences between the two sexes and the kinds of behavior appropriate to them are laden with culturally determined elements, and that any decisions we reach today on these matters will rest more upon our own judgment about what we want to stand for in the face of our cultural situation rather than on any pre-given, absolutely binding law.

As part of the process of determining responsible meaning for maleness and femaleness, we humans share in the creative responsibility for determining how a person may appropriately complement his or her own personhood through faithful companionship and partnership with another person. To say that God created humankind male and female, called man and woman to join in partnership as one flesh, and commanded them to multiply (Gen. 1:27–28, 2:24) is to describe how God intended loving companionship between a man and a woman to be a fundamental pattern of human relationship and the appropriate context for human procreation. However, to say that God created humankind male and female, called man and woman to join in partnership as one flesh, and commanded them to multiply is not to state that God intended to limit the possibility for loving companionship and partnership to heterosexual marriages that produce offspring. Jesus' own celibate lifestyle and his emphasis upon the family of faith rather than upon the biological family (Matt. 10:34–39, 12:46–50, and parellels) highlight the primacy that the New Testament gives relationships based on self-giving love over relationships based solely on the Israelite orders of creation. Thus, the primary ethical issue in relationships between Christians is not whether the relationship conforms to a concept of "orders of creation" but whether for the persons involved the relationship encourages and sustains growth in faith and self-giving love.

In light of the indeterminateness at birth of gender and of sexual orientation, and in light of this understanding of the primary ethical issue in relationships between Christians, one may now ask whether Israel's and Paul's understanding of *the exclusiveness of humans' heterosexual design* is not a misreading of nature. Let us approach this question through an analogy. Humankind is equipped by nature for walking on the ground. May one therefore correctly infer about human locomotion that we are designed by nature *only* to walk? Humankind is equipped by nature for heterosexual intercourse. May one therefore correctly infer about human sexuality that we are designed by nature *only* to relate heterosexually?

In both cases, the answer is apparently, "No." God creates humans with legs but also with minds capable of creating alternative modes of locomotion natural for humans. Humans normally walk, but *by nature's own gift* we have the capacity to create circumstances in which our bodies hurtle through the sky at speeds of more than 550 miles per hour in perfect peace and relaxation. So, too, it now appears, God creates humans with the capacity to create alternative modes of sexuality natural for humans. Humans normally relate heterosexually, but *by nature's own gift* we have the capacity to create circumstances in which our bodies interact homosexually. Our species is by nature creative, and all human creativity, whether social or technological, is natural. Even in the area of sexuality, humankind experiences the dimension of freedom, for our sexual patterns are not predetermined biologically.

If Israel and Paul misread nature's design for human sexuality, did they nonetheless correctly perceive God's *exclusive intent* for human sexuality? As philosophers say, "'Can' does not imply 'ought'." That we humans can develop airplanes does not imply that we ought to. That we humans can develop homosexual behavior does not imply that we ought to. Perhaps God designed us as the kind of being capable of developing airplanes, but did God nonetheless intend for us not to develop them? Perhaps God designed us as the kind of being capable of developing homosexual behavior, but did God nonetheless intend for us not to develop it? In answering these questions we cannot appeal to nature's design. We must appeal to other criteria.

"Ought humans to have developed airplanes?" is not a question directly answered in Scripture. So in answering it the Christian engages in critical ethical reflection. Motives for, and consequences of, human flight are defined and then evaluated in the light of general biblical and ethical principles. To fly in an airplane in order to share a Christmas season with one's parents (love or respect for parents) is good. To fly in an airplane in order to drop napalm bombs on the enemy (hatred or disrespect for the value of human life) is bad. The development of the airplane can serve creative, loving purposes or hateful, wasteful purposes. Thus, ethical judgment falls not upon the creation of the airplane but upon its use. Its use can be either obedience to God or obedience to sin.

"Ought humans to have developed homosexual behavior?" is a question that seems to be directly answered by Paul and Leviticus. So in answering it many Christians do not engage in critical reflection. Paul and Leviticus have defined the motive for, and consequence of, human homosexual behavior: self-serving passion and divine wrath. Thus, many Christians accept the understanding that homosexual behavior can manifest only "fallen" purposes, that it can play no valid role in Christian partnerships, and that it can be obedience only to sin. It is these apparent biblical answers and the resultant Christian understandings that require critical examination. Can homosexual behavior ever be obedience to God? Can it ever be part of relationships that support growth in Christian faith and in self-giving love? Can it ever be a part of a sanctified life?

In Paul's day, there was a similar but different set of questions. Ought Gentile civilization and culture ever to have been developed? Can certain Gentile modes of behavior ever be obedience to God? Can a Gentile lifestyle support growth in Christian faith and in self-giving love? Can a Gentile life ever be a sanctified life? Palestinian Judaism viewed Gentile culture with great disgust. Certainly one could not remain an uncircumcised, non-kosher Gentile and be fully obedient to God. Even Jesus, according to Matthew, proclaimed that his earthly mission was directed exclusively to Jews (Matt. 10:5–6, 15:24) and likened Gentiles unto dogs (Matt. 15:26). Jesus' disciples were Palestinian Jews. Peter, for one, was convinced that the will of God required Gentiles to convert to Jewish civilization and culture—until his experience narrated in Acts 10:1–11:18. *The Risen Lord and the Spirit persuaded Peter otherwise.*

A Roman centurion named Cornelius was a devout, God-fearing Gentile who was liberal in alms and constant in prayer. He was allowed by Jews to attend synagogue, but as an uncircumcised and non-kosher person, he could never become a true convert to Judaism. In a vision, an angel of God instructed Cornelius to send for Peter. (Acts 10:3–6.) The next day Peter himself had a vision in which he saw numerous non-kosher animals and heard the Lord himself commanding him to kill and eat them. Peter protested his piety; but the Lord proclaimed, "What God has cleansed, you must not call common." (10:9–16.) Peter, perplexed as to what the vision could mean, was then told by the Spirit to rise and to meet and accompany three messengers of Cornelius whom the Spirit had sent. (10:17–20.) Peter did so, the meaning of his vision having become clear. The non-kosher animals symbolized Gentile people. It was Gentiles whom God had cleansed and proclaimed clean. (10:28–29.) God had recognized the devout hearts of Cornelius's household and had fully cleansed them within their Gentile estate. This recognition was confirmed by the visible gift of the Holy Spirit, causing Peter to exclaim, "Can any one forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" (10:44–47.) And Cornelius and his uncircumcised, non-kosher household were baptized. (10:48.) When Peter thereafter went up to Jerusalem, he had to explain his association with Gentiles to the conservative circumcision party among the Jewish Christians. After recounting the vision of the Lord, the words of the Spirit, and his arrival at Cornelius's home, Peter proclaimed, "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. . . . If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, *who was I that I could withstand God?*" (11:15, 17; emphasis added.) The narrative concludes: "When [the conservatives] heard this they were silenced. And they glorified God, saying, *'Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life.'*" (11:18; emphasis added.)

Note the dynamic of this narrative. A long-standing definition of required obedience to God, seemingly endorsed by the lifestyle and mission of Jesus himself, was canceled by a word from the Risen Lord. The validity of that word was then confirmed by the visible gift of the Holy Spirit. God did a new thing. God fully cleansed the devoted Gentile heart, granted repentance unto life, and bestowed the sanctifying Spirit. The very question,

"Ought Gentile civilization and culture ever to have been developed?" was replaced by *a fact*—God chose to sanctify some uncircumcised, non-kosher Gentiles. In otherwise devout people the marks of Gentile culture were accepted by God and through God's power became a social matrix capable of sustaining growth in Christian faith and in self-giving love.

Today, in our own context, is God again showing us a new thing? Is a long-standing definition of required obedience to God being canceled by a word from the Risen Lord? Are there manifest signs of the Spirit to confirm the word? Are we today, like Peter of old, confronted by a phenomenon that defies our traditional understanding of God's will? Has God fully cleansed and proclaimed clean the devoted homosexual heart? Has God granted repentance unto life? Has God bestowed the sanctifying Spirit to work within the homosexual estate? Has the very question, "Ought humans to have developed homosexual behavior?" been replaced by the fact that God has chosen to sanctify some homosexual persons? In otherwise devout people have the marks of homosexuality been accepted and have homosexual relationships become capable of sustaining growth in Christian faith and in self-giving love?

Paul himself understood that in the Spirit the question, "What ought I to do?" is replaced by the questions: "What is God in fact doing to and through me?" and "Whither does God's love impel me?" Thus Paul did not really answer any such question as "Ought humans to have developed homosexual behavior?" Leviticus answered that question, because Leviticus codified law. But Paul did not codify law; he cataloged the work of the Spirit. Paul stated his strong conviction that in his time and place God had abandoned the homosexual Gentiles to their particular creativity, that in his time and place homosexual behavior could not be part of a relationship which sustained growth in faith and self-giving love, and that in his time and place the Spirit was not visibly sanctifying Gentile Christians within a homosexual estate. He saw such behavior as part of a larger pattern of sin manifesting general wickedness.

Today, however, a small but increasing number of Christians believe that they have encountered some homosexual "Corneliuses." They believe that in this time and place the Spirit is visibly redeeming and sanctifying some Christians within a homosexual estate. They have encountered some self-affirming homosexual persons who bear the visible and unmistakable gifts of the Spirit cataloged by Paul himself: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. (Gal. 5:22–23.) They have met self-affirming homosexual persons who are not idolaters but God-fearers whose deepening faith in Jesus as the Christ impels them to seek membership in the Christian community. They have met self-affirming homosexual persons who are motivated not by lust but by deepening, growing, self-giving love—a purified passion that bestows value on the loved one and gives strength to the loved one. They have met self-affirming homosexual persons who respond not to the law but to God's specific commands to their unique human situations—to express responsible love as homosexual persons. All of this leads them to conclude that Paul did not envision all possible expressions of homosexuality. God is acting to sanctify persons in their homosexual estate. And if this be so, who are these Christians that they can withstand God?

These Christians do not judge the justification of such homosexual persons to be "cheap grace," for they believe the persons' turnings to God to be genuine repentance and surrender. These Christians do not judge the sanctification of such homosexual persons to be "powerless grace," for they recognize the persons' sexual expressions to be instruments of self-giving love. These Christians do not judge the lives in the Spirit of such homosexual persons to be antinomian, for they understand the persons' lives to be responses to personal Divine commands, which in a world confused and corrupted by sin no universal law could have anticipated.

Yet these Christians hold no illusion that the lives of such homosexual persons are any less prone to the temptations of the flesh than are their own. *Simul justus et peccator*—at the same time justified and sinner. Thus are all Christians. But through God's Spirit, *porneía* (sexual immorality) does in fact give way to love and faithfulness in all Christians.

Likewise, these Christians hold no illusion that all homosexual persons are justified and sanctified any more than all heterosexual persons are. The misuse of human sexuality in our society is itself fundamental sin. Furthermore, human sexuality often becomes the distorted victim of other sinful forces, such as the craving for dominance and power. Some homosexualities are truly pathological and do need healing ministries. Some homosexualities are truly the root of sin in a person's life and must be abandoned as part of genuine spiritual development. However, some homosexualities can be and are full and important parts of lives that seek devoutly to express maturing faith and self-giving love.

The way in which the Spirit chooses to sanctify and transform a life cannot be judged in advance. To each person the Spirit comes as a unique and individual gift. (I Cor. 7:7, 12:7.) Furthermore, the transformation of the Spirit is a dynamic process affecting not only action itself but also dispositions to act and intentions to act. The transformation of the Spirit is the dynamic growth of character in its entirety. Therefore, sanctification or the absence of sanctification cannot be measured or gauged solely by the formal application of "marks" of the Spirit to this particular behavior or that particular behavior. To try to do so is to try to codify the Spirit itself. Spiritual development can only be measured or gauged as the living Spirit within a particular Christian community, guided by the Word of God, directly encounters and verifies the living Spirit within a particular person.

For this reason there can be no universal prescription for the church's approach to self-affirming homosexual Christians. Each congregation must search and test the Spirit as it is manifested in the entire configuration of each homosexual Christian's personality. However, the advocates of Model C believe and affirm that God has chosen to sanctify some homosexual persons as homosexual persons.

Likewise there can be no universal prescription for the church's approach to self-affirming homosexual persons who seek to unite with the United Presbyterian Church.

However, genuine repentance unto life need not imply advanced spiritual development, but only an initial gift of the Spirit to enable a person to give the honest affirmation, "I *intend* to be Jesus Christ's disciple, to obey his word and to show his love." The church should welcome homosexual persons of such sincere intention and should provide a loving, supporting community in which the individual gift of sanctification may come to fruition—whether that gift be the maturing of responsible homosexual love, the healing of psychosocial disordering, or the abandonment of fundamental sin.

It is true that the Bible nowhere speaks positively of homosexual behavior and in several places speaks negatively of it. However, the Bible in many places speaks about the Spirit—both about the mysteriousness of its movement and about the unmistakable effectiveness of its action. (e.g., John 3:5–8.) The Bible tells of a God who leads the sinner to repentance, who redeems, who sanctifies. The Bible tells of a living God, a moving Spirit, who transforms evil into good, who proclaims clean that which previously was held to be unclean, who acts ever anew in surprising ways. The Bible tells of a God who through Christ's victory has assuredly conquered the forces of evil. Confident of this victory, the church should make bold to follow the leading of the Spirit. The church should not be preoccupied with the question, "Ought humans to have developed homosexual behavior?" Rather it should address itself to the question, "Given the existence of homosexuality in a variety of socially determined forms, is God in fact redeeming and sanctifying some self-affirming homosexual persons?" When the church sees in some self-affirming homosexual Christians the love, joy, and peace of the Spirit, and when it sees the Spirit poised for the transformation of a community of people, why does it hold back, so fearful of Satan that it withstands God?

d. Model D

(1) Presuppositions and Informing Principles:

(a) "The Bible is . . . the words of men, in which and through which we believe the living, active, constantly contemporary Word of God comes to men." (Treese, in Gearhart and Johnson, eds., *Loving Women/Loving Men*, p. 28.)

(b) "By the Word, the patristic writers meant to name the continuing creative revelatory activity of God in the world. . . . In the whole world, at every point and in every time, the Word is at work. . . . and in every human life that same Word is both the undergirding and the dynamic which is the 'light that lighteneth every man.'" (Pittenger, "Bernard E. Meland," p. 548.)

(c) "In order to understand the 'spirit' of biblical language we have to discover the center around which it was built. This center is the same event which gave birth to the people of Israel: the Exodus. . . . Its immediate meaning for those who participated in it was liberation from bondage, liberation for the future, liberation for life. . . . The community of Israel understood that the liberating events were not simply something of the past. The meaning which it derives from the Exodus is projected over the whole cosmos, space, and time. The God of the Exodus, consequently, is a living God. He is the power which fills the whole of reality with the promise of liberation revealed in the Exodus. . . . Instead of being an abstract idea, therefore, God is to be verified by the fulfillment of the promise of human liberation from bondage and freedom for life. . . . What is faith if not readiness to rise, without certainty in its pocket, in a total openness to the future, in the hope that the future will bring the verification—or fulfillment—of the promises?" (Alves, in Marty and Peerman, eds., *New Theology No. 9*, pp. 237–8, 240.)

(d) "Jesus Christ the Liberator, the helper and the healer of the wounded, is the point of departure for valid exegesis of the Scriptures from a Christian perspective. . . . In God's revelation in Scripture we come to the recognition that the divine liberation of the oppressed is not determined by our perceptions but by the God of the Exodus, the prophets, and Jesus Christ who calls the oppressed into a liberated existence." (Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, p. 82.)

(e) "The Church is itself when it witnesses to God's saving activity in Jesus Christ, that is, when it makes clear God's renewed authorization, commandment, and liberation to man to be human, to create his own history and culture, to love and to transform the world, to claim and exercise the glorious freedom of the children of God." (Míguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation*, p. 167.)

(f) "The message of salvation as expressed in the Bible and heard among the nations today. . . . has to do with new joy and wholeness, freedom and hope that is experienced in the lives of individuals and communities as a gift of God. This message of liberation is good news to those of our age who are searching for freedom, for meaning, for community, for authentic existence as human beings." (Russell, *Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective—A Theology*, p. 106.)

(g) ". . . justification seeks out the poor, the oppressed, the excluded, and the downtrodden, with empowerment for dignity, for self-acceptance and for responsible moral life ordered in keeping with God's experienced grace." (Edwards, "The Ordination of Homosexuals: An Affirmative View," p. 12.)

(h) "God is unchanging, if one is speaking of his abstract essence. Nothing can affect this abstract essence, so it is strictly absolute, eternal, immutable. Also belonging to God's essence is his eternal purpose or subjective aim; this purpose 'changeth not.' But God's purposive action is always changing, for he does something new in each moment, responding to the world's decisions and then influencing it in line with his eternal purpose. . . . God's eternal subjective aim is that all the entities of the world experience existence as good, and that they constantly experience it as better. . . . For God as Holy Spirit is always influencing man toward that end which will bring him the greatest fulfillment consonant with the good of the rest of creation. . . . Since there are a variety of competing impulses on man that can be claimed to be the spirit of God, man needs some standard by which to 'test the spirits,' to decide which one is the *Holy* Spirit. For the Christian, that standard is Jesus as the Christ. The Christian takes that which was revealed in him as the Logos of reality, as the clue to what the truly divine reality is, and what it is leading us toward." (Griffin, *Process Christology*, pp. 183, 185, 236, 238; emphasis is the author's.)

(i) "In traditional Christianity, God has been understood as a Cosmic Moralist, in the sense of being *primarily* concerned with the development of moral behavior and attitudes in human beings. . . . Process theology sees God's fundamental aim to be the promotion of the creatures' own enjoyment. God's creative influence upon them is loving, because it aims at promoting that which the creatures experience as intrinsically good. . . . But this is not in conflict with an emphasis on morality. God wants us to enjoy, true. But he wants us *all* to enjoy. Accordingly, he wants us to enjoy in ways that do not unnecessarily inhibit enjoyment on the part of others. That puts it negatively. Positively stated, God wants our enjoyment to be such as to increase the enjoyment of others. . . . In traditional Christianity, morality and enjoyment were often seen as in fundamental opposition. In process thought, morality stands in the service of enjoyment." (Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, pp. 54, 56–7; emphasis is the authors'.)

(j) "Moral codes are of God in several senses. First, there would be no morality at all except for the distinction between possible ideals and actual things which God introduces into the world. Second, these codes express the widening of concern that God specifically causes in us. Third, they are necessary to sustain the forms of order that make possible the individual realizations of enjoyment that are part of God's aim. Thus the law is holy, just, and good. It is itself a gift of God. But it does not have the power to save us. It often adds to the discord within our experience. It can render us insensitive to new modes of enjoyment struggling to be born. It can give us a false sense of rightness that blinds us to the true rightness in things. The presence of God in us is divine grace . . . It gives rise to adventure, and to art. To it we owe the beauty we experience as well as the discord that makes us restless with the law. . . . The supreme gift is Peace, which is an alignment of ourselves with God's grace. . . . Peace fulfills the general intention of the law without opposing the requirements of the moral code to one's own interests. Peace also frees one to act differently from the way any moral code requires in the immediate enjoyment of beauty and in the voyage of adventure toward new forms of beauty." (Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, pp. 126–7.)

(k) ". . . whatever else God may be, he is above all the cosmic lover whose scope is indeed cosmic but whose love is applied particularly and specially to each of his human children. . . . God not merely *is* love; he is ceaselessly and unfailingly in action *as* love." (Pittenger, "A Theological Approach to Understanding Homosexuality," pp. 437, 438; emphasis is the author's.)

(l) "Above all, man is being created *for love;* he finds his true fulfillment only in the mutuality, reciprocity, and participation that love signifies and that love provides. . . . Man's physiological and psychological equipment is such that his need and desire for love and for loving express themselves through sexual channels, although love and sexuality are not identical terms—the latter is the instrumentality for the former." (Pittenger, in Oberholtzer, ed., *Is Gay Good?,* p. 223; emphasis is the author's.)

(m) "The root of sin is failure to realize life in love . . . . all human loves have something in them which pulls them on a tangent toward the love of God. They reflect their origin in God." (Williams, *The Spirit and the Forms of Love,* pp. 134–5.)

(n) "The physical and emotional attraction of another person laden with the possibilities of sexual fulfillment may lead to the will to unite one life with another, and to an acceptance of the needs of the other as redirecting the course of life. Then it has become love. . . . Certainly the elements of play, self-expression and self-discovery, the wary search for the other person which accompany sexuality in every culture, are the foreplay of love. . . . But the inner destiny of the sexual experience is toward the intimate and transforming discovery of love. . . . What sexual behavior will serve rather than destroy the growth of authentic love?" (Williams, *The Spirit and the Forms of Love,* p. 228.)

(o) "Homosexual acts are not sinful when they are expressions of love, moving those who engage in them toward faithfulness, tenderness, respect, hopefulness, mutuality." (Pittenger, in Oberholtzer, ed., *Is Gay Good?,* p. 233.)

(p) "The response to God in Christ is a response of free will—not to an absolute code of moral admonitions but to a dynamic, personal experience of the inclusive love, forgiveness and grace (the spiritual empowerment) of God in one's own life. My experience as a Gay man in a hostile society has often been an experience of separateness—from God and from other persons. For many years I believed it was necessary to hide the fact of my Gayness, thinking that doing so would overcome the separateness. I lived with pretense, related to others with deception and denied my experience of love. In doing so, I denied the power of God in my own life." (Johnson, in Gearhart and Johnson, eds., *Loving Women/Loving Men,* p. 100.)

(q) "Gay people who have remained within the institutional church, even though we have more than adequate reason to abandon it, have remained because of our faith. We remain because our affirmation of Jesus as Christ requires us to respond to the covenant community he sought to enable. We are called to live in community with all who dare to take the name of Christ, even those who strive diligently to deny us our right to live freely in that community. Though many of our Gay sisters and brothers look upon our religious faith as more of an affliction than an attribute, we continue to respond to the call to discipleship. We live with the hope that the institutional church will rediscover its identity as a Community of Faith." (Johnson, in Gearhart and Johnson, eds., *Loving Women/Loving Men,* p. 99.)

(r) "The universality of Christian love is only an abstraction unless it becomes concrete history, process, conflict; it is arrived at only through particularity. To love all men does not mean avoiding confrontations; it does not mean preserving a fictitious harmony. Universal love is that which in solidarity with the oppressed seeks also to liberate the oppressors from their own power, from their ambition, and from their selfishness. . . . One loves the oppressors by liberating them from their inhuman condition as oppressors, by liberating them from themselves." (Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation,* pp. 275, 276.)

(s) ". . . the majority of Christians have recognized a freedom in biblical authority which does not reduce ethics to specific items of a code shaped by first century customs. There are broader principles of justice and liberation inherent in the message of the gospel and expressive of the spirit of Jesus. We believe that these broader principles require that we break the taboo of those texts which still reflect confusion between homosexual orientation and practice and do not acknowledge a morally responsible expression of the homosexual condition." (Edwards, "The Ordination of Homosexuals: An Affirmative View," p. 14.)

(t) "We [Gay Christians] are called to share in the movement within the church that will serve to liberate the church from its homophobia and sexism. . . . The liberation of the church is long overdue. The time has come for the church to be held accountable for the violence it has done to our dignity and to our experience of love. It is time for the church to be true to its mission of liberation." (Johnson, in Gearhart and Johnson, eds., *Loving Women/Loving Men,* p. 114.)

(2) Application of the Presuppositions and Principles:

The Word, "the continuing revelatory activity of God in the world," confirms for the church the great theme of the Bible: God is active love, creating, responding to need, and liberating. "God is love" (I John 4:8, 16), and to be created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27) means to be created in the image of love. Therefore, humanity's nature is active love, creating, responding to need, and liberating.

As love, God created the world. (Ps. 136:1–9.) As love, God created and liberated Israel—calling it out of the bondage of Egypt (Ps. 136:10–25, Deut. 7:6–8, Ex. 3:7–10) and of Babylon (Isa. 43:14–15), calling it into a life of creating, liberating love (Hos. 12:6, Mic. 6:8, Isa. 1:16–17, 42:5–7, 58:6–8). As creating, liberating love God became incarnate in Jesus (John 1:1–18, I John 4:9–11, Luke 4:16–21)—making available to all people freedom from bondage and sin and freedom for actualizing the love (both personal and social) appropriate to human nature (II Cor. 3:17, I John 4:12–21). Sin frustrates and distorts the image of love in humanity; and liberation from sin enhances, strengthens, and perfects that image. Yet in all love—even that which is frustrated or distorted—God is at work.

One of the beautiful means by which humans express love is sexuality. Humankind is "a complex unity of matter and mind, stuff and spirit, body and soul." Therefore, an individual's "loving and learning to love involes his body quite as much as his spirit." (Pittenger, "A Theological Approach," p. 439.) To suppress sexuality without a unique and extraordinary gift of the Spirit for celibacy is to violate both body and spirit. It is to frustrate a vital instrumentality of love and to play havoc with mind and emotions.

The sexuality of a minority of humans is oriented toward persons of the same sex. Society and the church have traditionally condemned this homosexual minority as a group, without differentiating between persons' individualities of personality, character, and behavior. However, moral properties are not properly assigned to classes of people. Thus, ethical judgment must not be based on class memberships such as race, sex, or sexual orientation. Rather, ethical judgment must be based on how well the individual person employs and utilizes currently available resources to express love, to create beauty, and to increase joy. Of course, no person actualizes perfect love, perfect beauty, or perfect joy. Each person's creative ability suffers the frustrations and distortions of sin. Yet in the case of sexuality, the sin that frustrates and distorts does not reside in the orientation itself. Sexual orientation does not itself determine a person's capacity for love, beauty, and joy. Sexual orientation does not itself define one's relationship to God. A homosexuality that issues in faithful, tender, respectful, hopeful, and mutually fulfilling acts is an instrument of love, beauty, and joy. As such, it is moral.

The condemnation by society and the church of homosexual persons as a class results in widespread discrimination and oppression. Homosexual persons, therefore, are persons who need freedom from bondage and freedom for life. They need freedom to develop their homosexualities as instruments of love. Through the action of the Spirit, the God revealed in the Exodus and in Jesus Christ calls them into this liberated existence and calls the church to proclaim and mediate to them this

good news. In the face of this call, for the church to demand of homosexual persons an involuntary celibacy is to frustrate love, beauty, and joy. For the church to refuse to acknowledge that many homosexual persons express faithfulness, tenderness, respect, hope, and concern for mutual fulfillment through their sexualities is to frustrate and distort love, beauty, and joy. For the church to name that which expresses love, beauty, and joy "sin" is to distort love, beauty, and joy. So long as the church does so demand, so refuse, and so name, it binds itself to sin. Ironically, self-affirming homosexual Christians offer the church indispensable help in becoming free from this particular bondage. As the church comes to recognize the expression of God's love in its homosexual members, it becomes free to turn toward the wider homosexual community with a positive ministry. Such a ministry would begin by accepting homosexual persons as they are and would continue by finding ways to enhance, strengthen, and perfect the image of God's love that already exists within them. So to minister would mediate grace and bring liberation to a people sorely oppressed—in the name of God.

III. The Church's Ministry and Homosexual Persons

How then shall the church respond in ministry to homosexual persons—young and old, within and without? What shall the church undertake on behalf of persons uncertain about their sexual orientation and frightened by developmental processes they cannot control and do not understand? Obviously, United Presbyterians identified with the different models of biblical authority and interpretation will construct different models of ministry; for the objectives and forms of ministry will be decisively shaped by one's answer to the question, "Is homosexual behavior per se sin?"

A. *The Problem of Homophobia*

Before any model of ministry can be constructed and implemented, however, the heterosexual majority within the church must acknowledge and minister to the particular condition of sin that has caused our denomination to mimic society's posture of contempt toward homosexual persons rather than to extend toward them God's grace, love, compassion, and justice. That condition is seen in the exaggerated, irrational, dishonest, and virulent dimensions of our fear of homosexuality and homosexual persons. It is often called "homophobia."*

Many Christians are gripped by a dread of homosexual behavior out of all proportion to its magnitude as "sin" within the Bible. Such dread inhibits friendships and working relationships between heterosexual and homosexual persons. Thus, heterosexual Christians' stereotypes of homosexual persons go largely unchecked by personal knowledge and experience.

In January 1977, *Presbyterian Panel* distributed a questionnaire on homosexuality and related issues to its representative sample of United Presbyterians. To quote from the content analysis of that *Panel:*

> The emotion aroused by the issue of homosexuality was evident in the unusual number and substance of the written comments, by the use of superlatives, exclamation points, underscoring, and capital letters. Some were nearly illegible. We have a means for comparing the volume and nature of these comments to others because the same respondents (Panelists) have returned seven previous questionnaires. The written comments from the questionnaire on Panelists' views toward business and investments covered 251 typed sheets; the comments from the questionnaire on "people who are without the gospel" covered 239 typed sheets; the comments from this questionnaire covered 459 typed sheets, setting the record to date.
>
> Similarly, types of emotions expressed by respondents in their comments ranged from love through empathy, pity, fear, disgust, and despair to rage. (p. 110.)

Note the responses by members, elders, and pastors to the following statements about homosexual activities and to the following questions about ordination (pp. 66, 68):

"Homosexual activity is a physical (physiological) sickness."

	Members	Elders	Pastors
strongly agree	16%	21%	10%
agree	26	21	18
agree and disagree	17	13	24
disagree	18	20	26
strongly disagree	6	9	7
no opinion/don't know	11	13	13
no response	5	4	2

"Homosexual activity is a sin."

strongly agree	18%	25%	22%
agree	15	17	26
agree and disagree	14	12	28
disagree	21	17	13
strongly disagree	9	5	5
no opinion/don't know	17	19	4
no response	5	5	2

"Homosexual activity is a mental or emotional problem."

strongly agree	19%	29%	17%
agree	40	32	44
agree and disagree	18	16	23
disagree	6	4	5
strongly disagree	3	3	2
no opinion/don't know	10	12	8
no response	5	4	2

"People who engage in homosexual activities have as much of an opportunity for a loving relationship as do heterosexuals."

strongly agree	3%	2%	2%
agree	13	11	14
agree and disagree	16	14	22
disagree	22	20	26
strongly disagree	16	19	22
no opinion/don't know	25	28	14
no response	5	5	2

"Do you believe it might ever be judicious and proper for a presbytery to ordain to the professional ministry a person who engages in homosexual activities?"

no, never	45%	51%	39%
no, probably not	26	26	29
yes, possibly	14	12	20
yes	4	4	10
no opinion/don't know	7	3	2
no response	5	4	1

"Would *you* accept as your pastor a person who engages in homosexual activities?"

no, never	55%	64%	43%
no, probably not	25	19	30
yes, possibly	6	6	13
yes	4	2	8
no opinion/don't know	6	4	6
no response	4	3	1

Note also the Panelists' understanding of sources for their attitudes and opinions (pp. 69–71):

> Please indicate the extent to which each of the following situations or sources have contributed to the formation of your present attitudes and opinions concerning homosexuality.

	Members	Elders	Pastors
"Scripture" has not contributed in any way to my opinions and views	22%	13%	2%

*"Homophobia" was first used in this sense by Weinberg, *Society and the Healthy Homosexual.* Although the term is etymologically incorrect (such a word should mean "fear of the same"), it is now widely used with the above meaning and is certainly less clumsy than the term that is etymologically correct—"homoerotophobia."

	Members	Elders	Pastors
"Scripture"			
has contributed slightly to developing my opinions and views	17	14	4
has contributed moderately to developing my opinions and views	20	26	23
has contributed greatly to developing my opinions and views	34	41	71
no response	7	6	less than 0.5
"Church teachings"			
have not contributed in any way to my opinions and views	19%	14%	4%
have contributed slightly to developing my opinions and views	20	19	17
have contributed moderately to developing my opinions and views	28	30	46
have contributed greatly to developing my opinions and views	25	29	32
no response	8	8	1
"Community standards"			
have not contributed in any way to my opinions and views	14%	16%	13%
have contributed slightly to developing my opinions and views	26	16	32
have contributed moderately to developing my opinions and views	29	36	36
have contributed greatly to developing my opinions and views	24	24	18
no response	8	7	1
"Counseling with homosexuals"			
has not contributed in any way to my opinions and views	82%	83%	42%
has contributed slightly to developing my opinions and views	3	3	19
has contributed moderately to developing my opinions and views	2	2	22
has contributed greatly to developing my opinions and views	2	2	12
no response	12	10	4
"Conversations with homosexuals"			
have not contributed in any way to my opinions and views	65%	62%	31%
have contributed slightly to developing my opinions and views	9	11	24
have contributed moderately to developing my opinions and views	8	10	26
have contributed greatly to developing my opinions and views	7	7	17
no response	11	10	2
"Negative personal experiences with homosexuals"			
have not contributed in any way to my opinions and views	68%	68%	52%
have contributed slightly to developing my opinions and views	10	8	25
have contributed moderately to developing my opinions and views	4	7	15
have contributed greatly to developing my opinions and views	6	6	6
no response	12	11	2
"Positive personal experiences with homosexuals"			
have not contributed in any way to my opinions and views	72%	72%	52%
have contributed slightly to developing my opinions and views	6	7	18
have contributed moderately to developing my opinions and views	4	5	16
have contributed greatly to developing my opinions and views	4	4	10
no response	13	12	4

The Panelists' responses suggest that United Presbyterians' concepts about homosexual persons are based largely on Scripture, community standards, and church teachings and very little on either positive or negative personal experiences with homosexual persons. One may conclude that some United Presbyterians do not allow personal experience, whether positive or negative, to shape their views about homosexuality, that many have had no conscious contact or acquaintance with homosexual persons, and that some do not understand or admit to the sources of their attitudes and opinions. In any case, it is clear that the majority of United Presbyterians operate with concepts (whether true or false) that are uninformed by personal experiences with homosexual persons.

A situation in which strongly held attitudes toward persons are based largely on abstract principle rather than on concrete experience is fraught with danger. Principle can become the captive servant of unconscious (or even conscious) social and psychological fears, in which case prejudice, discrimination, and oppression come to be practiced against persons in the name of principle. All too often, we believe, this circumstance occurs in Christians' relationships with homosexual persons.

What are some of the fears to which our principles may become sinfully enslaved? What are some of the dynamics of homophobia?

First, many heterosexual persons see in homosexual persons a mirrored image of impulses they feel—and fear—within themselves. Kinsey's famous studies call attention to the surprisingly large number of heterosexual people who experience either incidental or more than incidental moments of homosexual attraction, arousal, or behavior. Such persons' fear of and guilt about their own seducibility may lead only too readily to their projecting basic responsibility for their feelings onto predominantly homosexual persons, labeling them "seducers."

Second, many heterosexual persons experience homosexual persons as a threat to their gender identity. Homosexual persons may not act the way "real" males or females "should." For some heterosexual males, tenderness, lessened competitiveness, and emotional intimacy with other men do not belong to an acceptable male gender schema. For some heterosexual females, strength of will, increased competitiveness, and independence from men do not belong to an acceptable female gender schema. Insofar as homosexual persons model such unacceptable behaviors, they become "perverters."

Third, many heterosexual persons experience discomfort and pain in their marriage relationships. Divorce is rampant. The temptation to divorce is epidemic. A number of marriages are held together not by love but by the residual fear that divorce is morally wrong. For those who genuinely value the family and believe it to be a guarantor of social stability but who also experience joylessness and pain in their own particular marriage, it is all too easy to experience guilt-ridden jealousy of those who seem "free"—such as the single, the "swinger," and the homosexual. And from within such guilt-ridden jealousy it is all too possible to project basic responsibility for the family's inner dis-ease onto those, like the homosexual person, who stand outside, labeling them "subverters."

Fourth, some people's desire for children arises in part from a fear of death and a desire to achieve some measure of immortality through offspring. Anyone such as a homosexual person who has no apparent need for children may pose a psychic threat to these people. In defense, they may imagine that the homosexual person really does desire children—secretly; and they may project onto him or her a need, in lieu of natural offspring, to abduct, seduce, or molest other people's offspring.

These four cases by no means account for all the possible dynamics of homophobia. However, they do illustrate some of the irrational and dishonest dimensions of fear and guilt that all too often captivate our principles. The church must confess its homophobia and be healed of it so that homosexual persons may be approached with grace rather than guilt, with love rather than hate, with compassion rather than fear, with justice rather than oppression.

B. *Model for Ministry I (presupposing that homosexual behavior per se is sin)*

All homosexual behavior is sinful but so, too, is every homophobic response. Fundamental to ministry is the need to administer the resources of grace for a double repentance and transformation in which heterosexual Christians renounce homophobia and find release in compassionate concern and in which homosexual Christians renounce the active homosexual lifestyle and find fulfillment either in celibacy or in a responsible heterosexual lifestyle.

First, a church should provide a preaching and teaching ministry in which people are confronted by two basic biblical truths: that of the perfectly holy God, who by love for persons given in Jesus Christ is moved to seek persons' release from sin and hatred; and that of the depth of sin within all persons, homosexual and heterosexual alike. God, who loves us and has designed the limits of human behavior both for human good and for divine glory, moves the heart toward true repentance—which is the basis for justification and the beginning of sanctification. Such preaching and teaching humble both the homophobic person and the active homosexual person by quickening their consciousness of having fallen short of God's will. Such preaching and teaching also motivate other Christians to give them help toward repentance and new life in Christ within the caring community of believers.

Second, a church should provide (or know how to refer persons to) a directive counseling ministry oriented toward change. The counselor needs to communicate both love for the homosexual or homophobic person and nonacceptance of homosexual or homophobic behavior. The counseling process should offer help in evaluating present patterns of emotion and behavior; exploration of the sexual dimensions of the problem; exploration of the nonsexual dimensions of the problem (such as self-image, gender identity, patterns of personal relationships, and spiritual condition); support for all past and present attempts at change; and assistance both in breaking present patterns of emotion and behavior and in establishing new ones. Change must be inwardly motivated and must not be forced by the counselor. In the case of the homosexual person, she or he must be candidly advised that not all homosexual fantasies and impulses will necessarily disappear but that resources for the self-motivated control of behavior can nonetheless be appropriated. A counseling ministry such as the one proposed can be greatly strengthened by providing the opportunity for counselees to participate in groups for support, therapy, prayer, and fellowship. Such groups may, and perhaps should, include persons who have completed or are completing the process of change from active homosexual behavior and now find fulfillment either in their commitment to celibacy or in their reorientation to heterosexuality.

Third, the preaching and teaching ministry of a church should include emphases on God's call to spiritual renewal, the need for zeal in both the personal and social dimensions of morality, and the power of the Spirit to transform lives.

Fourth, a ministering church should stress the grace and power for renewal that is available in the sacraments.

Fifth, a ministering church should teach and celebrate the positive joy of those expressions of sexuality that conform with biblical ethics. In particular, a church should develop or adopt a sex education program for its parents, children, and young people that communicates the biblical value that active sexual expression should occur only within the context of a committed, permanent heterosexual relationship. At the same time it should deal honestly, intelligently, and sympathetically with the confusion that many children and young people experience during the development of their gender identities and sexual object choices.

Sixth, a ministering church should hold up as positive role models for its children, young people, and adults, heterosexual persons whose relationships witness enduring Christian joy, heterosexual and homosexual persons whose single lifestyle is marked by the Christian joy of celibacy, homosexual persons who have found fulfillment and the joy of Christ in reorientation to a responsible heterosexual lifestyle, and all persons who have found release and the joy of Christ in overcoming homophobia.

Seventh, a ministering church should support efforts at the presbytery or synod level to provide a directive counseling ministry for homosexual and homophobic pastors and leaders of the church.

Eighth, a ministering church should engage in dialogue and in the sharing of Scripture and prayer with groups of Christians who do not agree that homosexual behavior per se is sin—such as the Presbyterians for Gay Concerns (Presbyterian Gay Caucus), a neighboring United Presbyterian congregation (perhaps), and the Metropolitan Community Church. Three desirable fruits of such dialogue and sharing would be: each group's experience of the other group's earnest commitment to Christ (thus working to prevent division within the church); the "sinful-per-se" group's experience of the spiritual potential of many homosexual persons (thus working to overcome homophobia); and the "not-sinful-per-se" group's hearing of a noncondescending exposition of Scripture's call for repentance, sanctification, and faith in the unfailing power of God's grace to redeem and transform repentant sinners (thus working to change homosexual behavior).

Ninth, a ministering church should become aware of the wider homosexual community in its area as an important field for Christian outreach. If a local gay community exists without an appropriate Christian ministry, the church should consider supporting or itself opening such a ministry. Wherever possible, repentant homosexual persons who are open and candid about their identity should be employed in such ministries, and the advice and help of communities of repentant homosexual

persons (such as the constellation of ministering groups called Exodus) should be sought.

Additional components of Model for Ministry I follow below in Section III D.

C. *Model for Ministry II (presupposing that homosexual behavior per se is not sin)*

As is the case with heterosexual behavior, some homosexual behavior is sinful, some homosexual behavior is pathological; but much homosexual behavior expresses a committed, caring, and joyful love. All homosexual behavior—whatever its motive, whatever its character—elicits homophobic responses that injure and oppress children of God. Fundamental to ministry is the need to administer those resources of grace, compassion, and justice that overcome homophobia and help each homosexual Christian to discover and fulfill God's particular plan for his or her life.

First, a church should provide a preaching and teaching ministry in which people behold two basic biblical images: that of the loving parent who runs to embrace the errant child while the child is yet far off; and that of the errant child whose response to parental affirmation is humble repentance. (Luke 15:20–21.) Such preaching and teaching call all Christians—heterosexual or homosexual, homophobic or homophile—to accept God's grace of affirmation with repentance for having placed so great a distance between ourselves and our Creator. Such preaching and teaching call the church to mediate God's grace of affirmation to ones outside the church who are "lost" (Luke 15:1–32), among whom are many homosexual and homophobic persons. Such preaching and teaching call the church to approach these "lost" ones with an embrace of love so that they too, experiencing grace, may humbly repent. Having done this, it is not our place, but God's alone, to judge the sincerity of repentance; it is not our place, but God's alone, to determine the individual path of sanctification.

Second, a church should provide (or know how to refer persons to) a nonjudgmental counseling ministry. The counselor needs to be aware of the complexities and multiplicities of homophobia and homosexuality and needs to be up-to-date in the reading of relevant literature. The counselor needs to have dealt successfully with any personal homophobia or homosexuality. The counselor needs to be able to recognize when the limitations of her or his own skills make referral of the counselee to another counselor necessary. The counseling process should offer psychological testing (for example, to help diagnose, insofar as possible, the sources of homophobia or to help determine whether the counselee is basically homosexual or basically heterosexual with intermittent homosexual feelings and attractions); exploration of both the sexual and the nonsexual dimensions of the problem; help in the counselee's setting of realistic therapeutic goals consistent with his or her optimum health, happiness, and spiritual fullfillment (whether, in the case of the homosexual person, those goals include reorientation, celibacy, or responsible homosexual expression); and resources for achieving the goals of therapy. An important auxiliary resource for the counselee is the opportunity to participate in a support group for prayer, conversation, and fellowship. Such groups should include persons who have completed similar therapy and have found health, happiness, and spiritual fulfillment.

Third, the preaching and teaching ministry of the church should include emphases such as evidence for the sanctifying action of the Spirit within the homosexual estate, the positive contributions of homosexual persons to the ongoing life of the church, an ethic of homosexual behavior, a theology of mutual partnership for homosexual couples, the need for proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ to the wider homosexual community, and the need for redressing the social, political, and economic injustices experienced by the wider homosexual community.

Fourth, a ministering church should stress the grace and power for renewal that is available in the sacraments, and it should offer the sacraments to all—regardless of sexual orientation—who in repentance of their sin profess Jesus Christ as Lord.

Fifth, a ministering church should teach and celebrate the positive joy of those expressions of sexuality that conform with Christian ethics.* In particular, a church should develop or adopt a sex education program for its children, young people, and adults and should encourage its pastor to seek specialized training in sex education. (For a lengthy and comprehensive discussion of what sex education is, see *Human Sexuality*, pp. 125–135.) The program should deal honestly and forthrightly at appropriate age levels with, among other subjects, the following specific topics: the physiology of sex; changing gender schemata in our society; the roles of companionship, complementarity, mutual fulfillment, and procreation in human sexuality; sexuality as an instrument of enduring personal love; the family and alternative lifestyles; and homosexuality and homosexual expression. In preparing and presenting the course, homosexual Christians should be used as resource persons. Young people do not become homosexual by speaking with homosexual persons or by hearing a lecture on the subject of homosexuality. But by speaking with homosexual persons and by hearing a lecture on the subject of homosexuality they may become better able to identify and deal with their own childhood experiences of sexual play, their own developmental fears and doubts, their own sexual orientation, others' sexual orientation, and incipient homophobia. An educational experience in which gender role or sexual anxieties, problems, and confusions become conscious and expressible can lead naturally to timely and helpful counseling.

Sixth, a ministering church should hold up as positive role models for its children, young people, and adults all persons who manifest the gifts of the Spirit in their personal relationships. In holding up such models, the church emphasizes spiritual development—growth in self-giving, self-liberating, life-serving, honest, joyous, and faithful relationships—not sexual orientation. The example of homosexual persons who manifest the gifts of

*A distinction is implied here between Christian ethics and biblical ethics. The two are obviously related. But they are not identical, for the church's understanding of what believers in Jesus Christ are to do is shaped by an ongoing dialectic between the Bible and the church's existential situation in a world where God continues to act. For further discussion of the distinction, see, for example, Lehmann, *Ethics in a Christian Context*, pp. 25–44.

the Spirit in responsible lifestyles cannot help but reduce homophobia and offer hope and inspiration both to the church itself and to the homosexual community.

Seventh, a ministering church should support efforts at the presbytery or synod level to provide a nonjudgmental counseling ministry for homosexual and homophobic pastors and leaders of the church. Also, a ministering church should support efforts at the presbytery or synod level to provide vocational counseling for homosexual pastors who face the decisions whether or not to "come out of the closet" and whether or not to remain in the professional ministry.

Eighth, a ministering church should engage in dialogue and in the sharing of Scripture and prayer both with groups of Christians who agree that homosexual behavior per se is not sin—such as Presbyterians for Gay Concerns (Presbyterian Gay Caucus), a neighboring United Presbyterian congregation (perhaps), and the Metropolitan Community Church—and with groups of Christians who believe that homosexual behavior per se is sin—such as Presbyterians United for Biblical Concerns, a neighboring United Presbyterian congregation (perhaps), and the Exodus groups. Desirable fruits of such dialogue and sharing would be: each group's experience of the other group's earnest commitment to Christ; the opportunity for many more heterosexual Christians to experience the spiritual power of homosexual Christians; the "sinful-per-se" group's hearing of a noncondescending exposition of Scripture's call for love, humility, and respect for conscience in the church's witness in the world to Jesus Christ and for faith that the unfailing power of God's grace to redeem and transform repentant sinners takes many forms; the opportunity for homosexual Christians to experience the affirmation of their worth in Christ by a wider circle of Christians; cooperative movement toward the granting of Chapter XXVIII status within the denomination to the Presbyterians for Gay Concerns; and a mutual experience of ministry in the proclaiming of Christ and his love to the world.

Ninth, a ministering church should become aware of the wider homosexual community in its area as an important field for Christian outreach. If a local gay community exists without an appropriate Christian ministry, the church should contact the community in order to learn directly from them what needs a Christian ministry could serve among them. Perhaps they include access to church facilities for various social services or the contribution of time, money, and expertise to the development of a community counseling center or of a self-sufficient gay congregation. Whenever possible, homosexual Christians should be employed in such ministries, and the advice and help of communities of homosexual Christians should be sought.

Additional components of Model for Ministry II follow immediately below in Section III D.

D. *Additional Ministries appropriate to both Models I and II*

United Presbyterians, whether we believe all homosexual behavior to be sin or not, can and should work together for the decriminalization of private sexual acts between consenting adults and for the passage of laws that guarantee the civil rights of every person—regardless of sexual orientation—to employment, housing, and public accommodations.

In 1963, the 175th General Assembly received the report of the Special Committee on Church and State, which stated:

> *American Presbyterians believe that God is sovereign over all the nations.* It is our conviction that God created the world and established civil authority among men. We firmly believe that the people of the nations forget God at their peril. We are convinced that the faith, the prayers, and the works of the church are necessary for the well-being of our country. But the government of our country must be neutral on matters of faith, dogma, and indoctrination. . . . Because of this, we adhere to the principle of separation of church and state. Under such separation, religious commitment brings no civil advantage. If profession of religion becomes such an advantage, danger of impure love for Christ is increased. We Presbyterians wish to live, teach, and evangelize within a political order in which no church will dominate the civil authorities or be dominated by them. (*Minutes,* 1963, Part I, p. 184.)

That Assembly went on to state as a basic principle:

> Because of the conflicts stemming from the pluralistic nature of our society; because of the abuses that have plagued every historic attempt at a theocratic society; because God has given all men freedom to choose or reject the redemption offered in Jesus Christ; and, because organic entanglement of church and state inevitably deprives men of the full exercise of that God-given freedom;
>
> The General Assembly redeclares its conviction that church and state must be organically separate. (*Minutes,* 1963, Part I, p. 185.)

Fundamental to the tasks of keeping church and state separate and of preserving the freedom of individual conscience within a pluralistic society is the maintenance of a clear boundary between the realms of private morality and criminal law. "Unless a deliberate attempt is to be made by society, acting through the agency of the law, to equate the sphere of crime with that of sin, there must remain a realm of private morality and immorality which is, in brief and crude terms, not the law's business." (*The Wolfenden Report,* p. 48.) Sexual conduct in private between consenting adults surely belongs to this "realm of private morality and immorality which is . . . not the law's business."

Society does play a legitimate role in regulating some sexual conduct, for criminal law properly functions "to preserve public order and decency, to protect the citizen from what is offensive or injurious, and to provide sufficient safeguards against exploitation and corruption of others, particularly those who are specially vulnerable because they are young, weak in body or mind, inexperienced, or in a state of special physical, official or economic dependence." (*The Wolfenden Report,* p. 23.) Thus, criminal law properly prohibits homosexual and heterosexual acts that involve rape, coercion, seduction by drugs, alcohol, or bribery, corruption of minors, mercenary exploitation, or public display. However, homosexual and heterosexual acts in private between consenting adults involve none of these legitimate interests of society.

Moreover, patterns and methods of enforcing the existing sodomy laws have actually worked against the legitimate interests of society. The enforcement of the laws in cases of homosexual acts but not in cases of prohibited heterosexual acts stirs resentment against law. The impossibility of enforcing the laws in all cases of homosexual acts breeds contempt for law. The threat of enforcing the laws in some cases of homosexual acts encourages the breaking of law through blackmail, extor-

tion, and bribery. The attempt to enforce the laws in some cases of homosexual acts encourages the violation of civil liberty and the invasion of the public's privacy through such police practices as entrapment and the monitoring of park benches and public lavatories with hidden microphones, closed-circuit television cameras, and trick mirrors. Finally, because of widespread homophobia, mere arrest for an alleged private homosexual act between consenting adults imprints an indelible social stigma devoid of mercy, which vitiates the fundamental judicial principle "innocent until proven guilty."

Granting the state the right in principle to prosecute and punish any one particular pattern of private sexual behavior between consenting adults establishes a precedent that in principle jeopardizes many fundamental tenets of American society—the freedom of individual conscience, the separation of church and state, the right to privacy, the guarantee of protection from invidious discrimination in the application of law, and the guarantee of protection from cruel and unusual punishments. Sexual conduct in private between consenting adults is a matter of private morality to be enforced by religious or ethical example and persuasion rather than by legal coercion. Where such conduct becomes subject to legal coercion, democratic government serves not to protect the legitimate rights of minorities but to tyrannize minorities in the name of the religious values of those who are presently the majority.

With good reason, then, the 182nd General Assembly (1970) proclaimed:

> Believing that the law should provide for the optimal condition of physical and mental health, and should allow for the optimal exercise of private moral judgment and choices in matters related to the sexual sphere of life; and recognizing that religious convictions held by individuals should not be imposed by law on the secular society; the 182nd General Assembly (1970): . . .
>
> Calls upon judicatories and churches to support and give leadership in movements toward the elimination of laws governing the private sexual behavior of consenting adults. (*Minutes*, 1970, Part I, p. 891.)*

The decriminalization of private homosexual acts between consenting adults is but a first step in guaranteeing the civil rights of homosexual persons in our country. Vigilance must also be exerted to prevent discriminatory applications to homosexual persons of laws against vagrancy, lewd and lascivious conduct, and disorderly conduct; to oppose federal, state, or local legislation that discriminates against persons on the basis of sexual orientation; and to initiate and support federal, state, or local legislation that prohibits discrimination against persons on the basis of sexual orientation in employment, housing, and public accommodations. In the words of the Tenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ (1975), "we hold that, as a child of God, every person is endowed with worth and dignity that human judgment cannot set aside. Denial and violation of the civil liberties of the individual and her or his right to equal protection under the law defames that worth and dignity and is, therefore, morally wrong. Our Christian faith requires that we respond to the injustice in our society manifested in the denial and violation of the civil liberties of persons whose affectional or sexual preference is toward persons of the same gender." (Reprinted in "Human Sexuality and the Needs of Gay and Bisexual Persons.")

In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), Jesus proclaims that the neighbor whom we are commanded to love is everyone, regardless of his or her religion and regardless of his or her understanding of God's law. Whether or not we "like" people or "approve" of their behavior, Christ commands us to respect their humanity and to cherish their life, liberty, and individual well-being.

In December 1975, the city council of Bloomington, Indiana, passed a local ordinance prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in employment, housing, education, and public accommodations. Many Christians of Bloomington, particularly those from conservative churches, responded in angry opposition to that action. Split between the impulses to show love and to demonstrate moral leadership in opposition to homosexual behavior, the Monroe County Evangelical Ministers' Association held a series of educational meetings in Bloomington, including several days of special seminars for pastors and counselors and a public lecture on the Indiana University campus. (Scanzoni, "Conservative Christians and Gay Civil Rights," pp. 857–858.)

Assessing the changes in attitudes among Bloomington's conservative Christians in the months after the meetings, Letha Scanzoni reports:

> . . . I have found that by and large the earlier spirit of condemnation has been replaced by sincere concern and compassion. The most prevalent attitude I encounter could be summed up as follows: Homosexuals are human beings, and it is not in keeping with Christian love to regard them as less than that. As human beings, they have needs for food, shelter, jobs and education, just as all other human beings do. Again, it is not in keeping with Christian love to prevent their meeting those needs. Viewed this way, the gay civil rights issue becomes not a matter of compromising with evil but rather a matter of showing Christ's love, compassion and justice. (Scanzoni, p. 859.)

In those states and communities like Bloomington where civil rights legislation is proposed, Christians' greatest concern focuses on the issue of employment. Misunderstandings of various provisions of such legislation need to be allayed with facts. Under civil rights laws, no church, church-related school, or church-related institution need hire any heterosexual or homosexual person in violation of its religious scruples (as guaranteed by the First Amendment to the Constitution); no employer need hire any heterosexual or homosexual person who is unqualified or incompetent; no firm or establishment need employ a heterosexual or homosexual person whose behavior on the job offends customers and calls into question the company's reputation.

Christians' greatest concern in the area of employment, however, focuses on a legal provision that is not misunderstood. Civil rights legislation stipulates that otherwise-qualified homosexual persons must be hired without discrimination as teachers by public schools and by nonsectarian private schools. The sources for Christians' concern in this matter are fears that homosexual teachers are somehow less competent and reliable than

*For further discussion of decriminalization, see *The Wolfenden Report*, especially pp. 23–55; Cantor and also Maddocks in Weltge, ed., *The Same Sex*, pp. 83–110; Hare, "The Law and the Homosexual"; and Barnett, *Sexual Freedom and the Constitution*. For development of a theological statement on the right to privacy and its protection, see either *Minutes* 1973, Part I, pp. 535–537, or more fully, "The Right of Privacy."

heterosexual teachers, that homosexual teachers will somehow influence children and young people to develop homosexual orientations, and that homosexual teachers are somehow more likely than heterosexual teachers to seduce or molest their students. Fears based on misunderstanding need to be allayed with facts. On December 15, 1973, the Board of Trustees of the American Psychiatric Association adopted the following resolution by a unanimous vote (with one abstention):

> Whereas homosexuality per se implies no impairment in judgment, stability, reliability, or general social or vocational capabilities, therefore, be it resolved that the American Psychiatric Association deplores all public and private discrimination against homosexuals in such areas as employment, housing, public accommodation, and licensing and declares that no burden of proof of such judgment, capacity, or reliability shall be placed upon homosexuals greater than that imposed on any other persons. Further, the American Psychiatric Association supports and urges the enactment of civil rights legislation at the local, state, and federal level that would offer homosexual citizens the same protections now guaranteed to others on the basis of race, creed, color, etc." (American Psychiatric Association, "Position Statement," p. 497.)

Commenting on this action in a letter written on March 25, 1975, to Dr. Bruce Voeller of the National Gay Task Force and made available for press release, John P. Spiegel, M.D., as President of the American Psychiatric Association, wrote:

> I realize that many laypersons are concerned about the hiring of homosexuals as teachers. These concerns are the product of misunderstanding, not of scientific knowledge. *Some, for instance, have feared that homosexual teachers might affect the sexual orientation of their students. There is no evidence to support this thesis, nor is there evidence to believe that seduction of a student by a homosexual teacher is any more likely to occur than heterosexual seduction.*
>
> Discrimination on the basis of sexual or affectional preference—like all forms of discrimination—is not only morally wrong, but results in tremendous waste of our human resources. Many fine teachers—from Socrates on—have been homosexuals. There are many homosexual teachers in our school systems now, but they are forced to live in fear of being "found out"—at considerable psychological cost to themselves and in turn to society. Others stay out of the teaching profession because they fear exposure. This situation should be remedied. A teacher should be judged on the basis of professional competence, not on the basis of personal lifestyle or sexual preference.
>
> I hope very much that legislation will be enacted to end a cruel and wasteful form of discrimination *that is based on prejudices rather than on scientific knowledge.* (*Gay Civil Rights*, p. 15; emphasis added.)

Two leading teachers' organizations have also expressed their opposition to discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in teacher personnel decisions—the National Education Association (Resolution E-5, July 1974) and the American Federation of Teachers (Executive Council Statement, 1970). (See *Gay Civil Rights*, pp. 12, 11.) On May 23, 1972, the District of Columbia Board of Education adopted a resolution stating a policy of nondiscrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in personnel matters. Two years later the President of the Board sent the National Gay Task Force a telegram that included this statement:

> This resolution was met with a limited amount of community opposition and there has been no opposition to this resolution within the public school system itself. *Additionally, the passage of this resolution has not resulted in any problems within the public school system.* (*Gay Civil Rights*, p. 14; emphasis added.)

The principle that the civil rights of homosexual persons should be guaranteed has in recent years gained increasing support from professional organizations and church bodies; for example, in addition to those groups cited above, the American Psychological Association (1975), the American Association for the Advancement of Science (1975), the American Public Health Association (1975), the American Anthropological Association (1970), the American Personnel and Guidance Association (1971), the National Council of the Churches of Christ (1975), the Executive Council of the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan (1974), the United Church of Christ (1975), the National Federation of Priests' Councils (the largest association of Roman Catholic priests in the United States, 1974), and the American Jewish Committee, New York Chapter (1974).

United Presbyterians, whether or not we believe all homosexual behavior to be sin, hold common commitments to the separation of church and state; to the preservation of a realm of private morality subject to religious or ethical conscience rather than to criminal law; to the right to a privacy free from surveillance by the state; to the right to freedom from invidiously discriminatory applications of law; to the protection of the legitimate rights of minorities; to the worth and dignity of each person as a child of God; and to Christ's commandment to show love, compassion, and justice toward our neighbors, including those we may not "like" or of whom we may not "approve." These common commitments summon us to work actively both for the decriminalization of all private sexual acts between consenting adults and for legislation guaranteeing the rights of all persons—regardless of sexual orientation—to employment, housing, and public accommodations.

IV. Homosexuality and Ordination in the United Presbyterian Church

A. *The Meaning and Purposes of Ordination in the United Presbyterian Church*

Ministry is the responsibility and task of the whole church. Every role played by every Christian should express the corporate ministry of Christ by proclaiming in the world the gospel of mercy and reconciliation. Thus can the church fulfill its role as the instrument of God's redemptive mission in the world.

For the purpose of ordering, organizing, and administering its work, the church discerns specialized gifts of ministry granted by God to some of its members and then, in the name of God, calls these members to ordained offices. Ordination in no way sets a person apart into a class or status separated from other Christians. The laying on of hands in and of itself imparts no special grace or character. It is the rite by which the church formally inducts its elected leaders into office and commends them both to God and to the people.

The three ordained offices of The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America are deacon, ruling elder, and minister of the word. The office of deacon is "one of sympathy and service, after the example of the Lord Jesus." (Form of Government (G), X, 1 (40.01).) To such office should be chosen "persons of spiritual mind, exemplary life, friendly spirit, and sound judgment." (G, X, 2 (40.02).) The board of deacons "shall minister to those in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress . . ." and, "under the direction of the session," shall perform other delegated responsibilities, such as those related "to the development of the grace of liberality in the members of the

church, to the devising of effective methods of collecting the gifts of the people, to the finances and properties of the church, and to its evangelistic, missionary, and educational programs." (G, X, 5 (40.05).)

The office of ruling elder is one of governance and oversight. "Ruling elders, the immediate representatives of the people, are chosen by them, that, in association with the pastors or ministers, they may exercise government and discipline, and take the oversight of the spiritual interests of the particular church, and also of the Church generally, when called thereunto." (G, IX, 4 (39.04).) To such office should be chosen persons "blameless in life and sound in the faith; they should be persons of wisdom and discretion; and in their walk and conversation should be examples to the flock." (G, IX, 3 (39.03).) "Men and women become qualified for membership in the session not solely by their involvement in ecclesiastical affairs, but by the maturity and effectiveness of their ministries in the world." (*Minutes,* 1970, Part I, p. 204.) Ruling elders are charged "to watch diligently over the flock committed to their charge, that no corruption of doctrine or of morals enter therein. . . . Ruling elders should also visit the people in their homes, especially the sick; they should instruct the ignorant, comfort the mourner, nourish and guard the children of the church; and all those duties which private Christians are bound to discharge by the law of love are especially incumbent upon them by divine vocation, and are to be discharged as official duties; they should pray with and for the people; they should be careful and diligent in seeking the fruit of the preached Word among the flock; and should inform the pastor of cases of sickness, affliction, and awakening, and of all others which may need special attention from the pastor. They should, moreover, cultivate zealously their aptness to teach the Bible and should improve every opportunity of doing so, to the end that destitute places, mission points, and churches without pastors may be supplied with religious services." (G, IX, 4 (39.04).)

The office of minister of the word is one of nurture, service, governance, and oversight. "When a minister is called to labor as a pastor, it belongs to that office to pray to God for and with the flock; to feed the flock, by reading, expounding, teaching, and preaching the Word; to cultivate in the congregation the singing of the praises of God; to administer the sacraments; to instruct the children and youth, and to lead in the educational program of the church; to visit the people, devoting especial attention to the poor, the sick, the afflicted, and the dying; and with the ruling elders to exercise the joint power of government." (G, VIII, 3 (38.03).) In addition, "ordained ministers of this Church have the right and responsibility to officiate or to refuse to officiate in marriage services under the provisions of the Book of Confessions, the Book of Order, and the laws of the state." (G, VIII, 6 (38.06).) Because this particular office of leadership is so basic and vital to the ongoing life of the church, "the Holy Scriptures require that some personal knowledge be previously had of men and women who are to be ordained to the ministry of the gospel, that this sacred office may be committed to strong and worthy persons, and that the churches may have an opportunity to form a better judgment respecting the talents of those by whom they are to be instructed and governed." (G, XVIII, 1 (48.01).) Thus, a candidate for the professional ministry must be initially approved as a candidate by her or his session and presbytery (G, XVIII, 3–4 (48.03–.04)); must pursue and satisfactorily complete a course of study approved by the presbytery (G, XVIII, 5 (1) (48.051)); (XIX, 2 (1) and (2) 49.021–.022)); must maintain regular personal contact with the presbytery's candidates committee (G, XVIII, 7–8 (48.07–.08)); must pass a series of standardized exams administered by the denomination as a whole (G, XIX, 2 (3) (49.023)); must submit to the presbytery for approval as final parts of trial a sermon, its exegetical basis, and a personal statement of faith (G, XIX, 4 (49.024)); must make a final appearance both before the candidates committee and before the entire presbytery—at which time are discussed the results of the previous parts of trial, plans for continuing growth and study, the acceptability of the candidate's views within the confessional standards of the church, the candidate's understanding of the vows required for ordination, and the candidate's commitment to the discipline of the United Presbyterian Church (G, XIX, 2 (5) (49.025)); and, finally, must have a valid call to a specific ministry (G, XIX, 1 (49.01); XVI, 3 (46.03)).

Within the criteria for church office, emphasis is placed on the "exemplariness," "blamelessness," and "worthiness" of the person's life. Such emphasis must always, however, be read within the context of the Christian doctrine that all persons are sinful and stand in constant need of God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness. Zeal for a holy life is an important quality, but it stands always secondary to the primary gift required of an ordained officer of the church—the ability to proclaim within the church and to the world the grace and faith that God freely offers to all people through Jesus Christ. The ordained leader, although rightly called upon to manifest the fruit and gifts of the Spirit, is not to be seen by the community primarily as one who models spiritual and moral attainment. (See Johnson, ed., *The Church and Its Changing Ministry,* pp. 31–37.)

Ordained office within the church is an instrumentality used by God and undergirded by God's grace for manifesting God's redemptive mission in and to the world. In light of this understanding, prospective deacons, ruling elders, and ministers of the word affirm the following vows during the rite of ordination:

> Do you trust in Jesus Christ your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of the world and Head of the Church, and through him believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?
>
> Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be, by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal, and God's word to you?
>
> Will you be instructed by the Confessions of our Church, and led by them as you lead the people of God?
>
> Will you be [a deacon, an elder, a minister of the word] in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and continually guided by our Confessions?
>
> Do you endorse our Church's government, and will you honor its discipline? Will you be a friend among your comrades in ministry, working with them, subject to the ordering of God's word and Spirit?
>
> Will you govern the way you live, by following the Lord Jesus Christ, loving neighbors, and working for the reconciliation of the world?
>
> Do you promise to further the peace, unity, and purity of the Church?

> Will you seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love? (G, XVII, 7(1)–7(8) (47.071–.078); XIX, 4(1)–4(8) (49.041–.048).)

An additional question appropriate to the specific office is then asked:

> (For deacons) Will you be a faithful deacon, teaching charity, urging concern, and directing the people's help to the friendless and those in need? In your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ? (G, XVII, 7(9) (47.079).)
>
> (For elders) Will you be a faithful elder, watching over the people, providing for their worship and instruction? Will you share in government and discipline, serving in courts of the Church; and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ? (G, XVII, 7(9) (47.079).)
>
> (For ministers of the word) Will you be a faithful minister, proclaiming the Good News in word and sacrament, teaching faith, and caring for people? Will you be active in government and discipline, serving in courts of the Church, and in your ministry, will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ? (G, XIX, 4(9) (49.049).)

B. *The Question: Should Self-Affirming, Practicing Homosexual Persons Be Ordained?*

1. The Constitutional Situation

The phrase "homosexual persons" does not occur in the Form of Government of the United Presbyterian Church, and *no phrase within the church's Constitution can be construed as an explicit prohibition of the ordination of self-affirming, practicing homosexual persons to office within the church.* Although the Heidelberg Catechism contains a clear statement that those guilty of "homosexual perversion" will not inherit the Kingdom of God (Q. 87, in BC, 4.087), that article of the Catechism does not of itself presently act as a legal *restriction* on the power of the congregation to elect, and elders to ordain, ruling elders and deacons or of the presbytery to approve and ordain ministers of the word. For ordinands vow only to be instructed and guided by the Confessions in general; they do not vow to be bound by every affirmation contained within them. Likewise, although Paul identifies the exchange of heterosexual behavior for homosexual behavior as sin, and although Leviticus describes homosexual relationships as contrary to the law of God, these few biblical verses also do not of themselves presently act as a legal *restriction* on the power of the congregation and elders or of presbytery to elect (approve) and ordain. For it is apparent from the illustrations of Models C and D above (Chapter II D) that some self-acknowledged, practicing homosexual candidates will be able on the basis of their interpretations of other biblical verses and themes to affirm in clear conscience and to the satisfaction of some congregations and elders and of some presbyteries the ordination questions, "Do you accept the Scriptures . . .?"; "Will you be [a deacon, an elder, a minister of the word] in obedience to Jesus Christ. . . ?"; Will you govern the way you live. . .?"; and "Will you . . . try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?"

On the other hand, *no phrase within the church's Constitution can be construed as an explicit mandate to disregard sexual orientation when evaluating candidates for ordination.* This differs from the present mandates to disregard race, ethnic origin, sex, marital status, and age (G, IX, 3 (39.03); X, 2 (40.02); XVII, 1 (47.01); XX, 1 (50.01).) It is clearly within the present power and prerogative of the individual congregation and elders or presbytery to decide on bases such as those outlined above in Models A and B (Chapter II D) that a self-acknowledged, practicing homosexual candidate not be elected (approved) and ordained because she or he does not properly understand the meaning of the vows required for ordination.

In summary, the constitutional standards of the United Presbyterian Church do not presently limit the power of congregations and elders and of presbyteries to decide as individual entities either to elect (approve) and ordain or not to elect (approve) and ordain self-affirming, practicing homosexual persons. Members and elders and presbyters are presently free to decide on the basis of individual conscience whether the election (approval) and ordination of a particular self-affirming, practicing homosexual candidate is consistent with biblical texts and themes, confessional standards, extra-biblical data, and personal experience.

In light of the present constitutional situation, the 190th General Assembly (1978), in responding to Overture 9 (1976) from the Presbytery of New York City, may choose one of at least five alternative actions:

(1) The General Assembly may initiate an amendment to the Constitution to prohibit the ordination of a self-affirming, practicing homosexual person. However, the task force unanimously opposes such an action. In no other case does the Constitution bar from ordination a specific type of person. In no other case does the Constitution single out a specific category of behavior as an automatic bar to ordination. A majority of the task force also believes that such a constitutional amendment would violate legitimate individual Christian conscience within the church, forcing some United Presbyterians who identify with Models C and D to deny what they believe, to believe what they deny, or to withdraw from the church.

(2) The General Assembly may initiate an amendment to the Constitution to require presbyteries to disregard homosexual behavior per se (although not the moral quality of sexual relationship) when evaluating candidates for ordination. However, the task force unanimously opposes such an action. Such an amendment would violate legitimate individual Christian conscience within the church, forcing some United Presbyterians who identify with Models A and B to deny what they believe, to believe what they deny, or to withdraw from the church. A minority of the task force also believes that such a constitutional amendment would sanction immorality.

(3) The General Assembly may offer an authoritative interpretation of what may correctly be deduced from the Constitution, stating that the Constitution's underlying biblical and theological presuppositions and informing principles definitely preclude the ordination of a self-affirming, practicing homosexual person. A minority of the task force favors such an action, believing that traditional biblical interpretation and Reformation theology clearly teach that homosexual behavior per se is sin and that to affirm one's homosexual behavior is to remain unrepentant of sin. Furthermore, a minority holds that congregations and presbyteries need peace, stability, and unity in order effectively to address the sin

of homophobia and earnestly to develop appropriate Christian ministries to the homosexual community. Such peace, stability, and unity can come about, according to this view, only if the General Assembly reduces the great anxiety about this issue among church members by proclaiming clearly and authoritatively that the ordination of a self-affirming, practicing homosexual would violate the basic principles (if not the explicit words) of the Constitution.

A majority of the task force opposes alternative action (3), believing that Models C and D (according to which homosexual behavior is not sinful per se) represent valid methods of interpreting the Bible and of thinking theologically within the United Presbyterian Church. Furthermore, a majority holds that denying the valid place of Models C and D within the pluralism of the church would undermine the peace and unity of the church, would reinforce the homophobia of the church, and would weaken the will of the church to develop appropriate Christian ministries within and on behalf of the homosexual community.

(4) The General Assembly may offer an authoritative interpretation of what may correctly be deduced from the Constitution, stating that the Constitution's underlying biblical and theological presuppositions and informing principles definitely preclude barring the ordination of a self-affirming, practicing homosexual person on the basis of homosexual behavior per se (although not on the basis of the moral quality of sexual relationship). The task force unanimously opposes such an action, but for two distinctly different reasons. A minority opposes such an action because, supporting Models A and B, it disagrees categorically with such a deduction. A majority opposes such an action because, although supporting Models C and D and agreeing with such a deduction, it recognizes the valid place within the pluralism of the church of Models A and B.

(5) The General Assembly may state first: that no prohibition of the ordination of a self-affirming, practicing homosexual person currently exists in the explicit words of the Constitution; that a valid pluralism of methods of biblical interpretation and of theological thinking currently exists within the church; and that it is the traditional duty and prerogative of presbyteries to make individual judgment concerning the fitness of a candidate for ordination. The General Assembly may state second: that therefore the General Assembly chooses not to offer an authoritative and limiting interpretation of what may correctly be deduced from the Constitution and instead remits the question to the presbyteries and congregations for further discussion and for adjudications made by individual Christian consciences considering individual cases and circumstances. A majority of the task force favors such an action, believing that both the integrity of individual Christian conscience and the principle of individual judgment of candidates must be preserved while also providing a framework within which the Spirit's true leading in this matter may become clear—a framework for the ongoing reading and interpreting of diverse scriptural, empirical, and experiential data, the ongoing dialogue of diverse Christian interpretations, the ongoing development of diverse Christian ministries, and the ongoing testing of diverse Christian spirits.

A minority of the task force opposes alternative action (5), believing on the basis of their biblical and theological understandings that no possibility for the ordination of a self-affirming, practicing homosexual person should be granted lest the purity, peace, and unity of the church be undermined, lest the ability of the church to deal with homophobia be impaired, and lest the will of the church to develop authentic Christian outreach to the homosexual community be weakened, and also believing that alternative action (5) does not adequately respond to Overture 9 (1976) from the Presbytery of New York City.

In summary, the task force unanimously opposes alternative actions (1), (2), and (4) and divides its support between alternative actions (5), the majority position, and (3), the minority position.

2. The Existential Situation

a. pluralism in the church

Many United Presbyterians conscientiously hold that all forms of homosexual behavior are sin. Other United Presbyterians equally conscientiously hold that many forms of homosexual behavior express a self-giving love and faithful joy acceptable to God. What is the church to do in the face of this pluralism? Shall the church limit in one direction or another the constitutional freedom that congregations and elders and presbyteries now have both to ordain and not to ordain self-acknowledged, practicing homosexual persons? Or shall the church tolerate the pluralism reflected in Models A–D and allow the freedom of congregations and elders and of presbyteries to remain unlimited?

Within the recent history of the church, we have recognized and affirmed an acceptable pluralism in ways of interpreting the Bible and of doing theology, and we have believed that such diversity does not contradict either the principle of our Book of Confessions or our common commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Indeed, we have believed that such pluralism strengthens our denomination by curbing any tendency toward the dogmatic assumption that we have full possession of God's truth and by supporting all open-hearted, open-minded quests for deeper understandings of God's truth. Yet the rationale for pluralism within the church has not been the belief that agreement on the truth cannot be reached in certain areas. Rather the rationale has been the belief that only through pluralism-in-dialogue (as opposed to pluralism-in-isolation) can the truth be reached in many disputed matters.

A report on Congregational Lifestyles from the Advisory Council on Discipleship and Worship, adopted by the 187th General Assembly (1975), states the situation clearly:

> The church is called to appreciate the reality of diversity that exists in its life and faith. This diversity can divide us or if used creatively can unite us as God's People . . .
>
> No one of us alone is able to grasp the whole of God's revelation in Jesus Christ and to comprehend the implications of that revelation for our common life. We *need* one another to enrich and to complete our own understanding of the faith and mission of the church.
>
> Diversity becomes a threat and potentially divisive when we fail to

recognize that it is *essential* to the nurture and health of the Body of Christ.

. . . Since the light of God's truth in Christ refracts into such a broad spectrum, each style of faith is bound to miss some of the richness of the other hues of that light. Each understanding needs the others to complete itself. As a denomination, we must allow our diversity to unify us, by insisting, first, that *each diverse style explore and live out its own understanding of the faith,* and second, that *each style recognize its own incompleteness and bind itself to dialogue with other styles.* In this way all may have access to the whole gospel of God in Jesus Christ.

. . . Diversity is a hallmark of the Presbyterian Church. There are differences in emphasis in the relation of the congregation to social justice, in the roots of ethnic and national backgrounds, in styles of lay and clergy leadership, in patterns of expression of loyalty to the American Way of Life, and in perceptions of responsibilities to the institutional church in its program, budget, management, and ministries.

Diversity is molded in congregations by many interactive forces including the socio-economic nature of the neighborhood, the traditions of the particular church and community, the dominant theological emphases of the parish and its leadership, the reactions to rapid social change, the distrust of the political processes of state and church systems, the tensions between younger and older churchpersons, and the changing sex roles in the society. . . .

The church has its ground in "one Lord, one baptism" and looks forward to one fellowship in Christ through the Spirit. But the People of God have many faces, many voices, and many forms of faithful obedience. To speak of diverse communities of the Lord is to underscore a human and historical reality of Christendom. The diverse communities are found in judicatories and in congregations of the Presbyterian Church. . . .

Controversy over the way Christians understand and respond to the authority of Scripture has continued through the centuries.

. . . The breakdown in communication created by arrogant attitudes, by one-way criticism and by unwillingness to search for elements of mutual concern and insight do not edify the church. But health is sustained when one side listens to another side with openness, with the expectation that the other side may interpret a part of the total picture which might otherwise have been overlooked. *Mutuality will be fostered by a common desire to be faithful servants of Christ and by the submission of private interpretations of Scripture to the Christian community for testing and confirming as an action of the witnessing dialogue in the church.* (*Minutes,* 1975, Part I, pp. 512, 513, 514, 515-516, emphasis added.)

b. CONFLICT OVER ORDINATION

During the past fifteen months, the Task Force to Study Homosexuality has engaged in a pluralistic dialogue with the church through open hearings and in a pluralistic dialogue among ourselves through closed meetings.

The task force quickly reached consensus that no biblical, theological, or constitutional bar exists to the ordination of those homosexual persons who have accepted and committed themselves to a celibate lifestyle or who have been reoriented to a responsible heterosexual lifestyle. Indeed, other gifts of office being equal, persons who are open about such experience and have not turned bitter or homophobic possess extraordinary potential for leading the church to new depths of understanding about the existence of multiple homosexualities; the homophobia that grips so many Christians; the discrimination and oppression that Christians fearfully inflict on homosexual children of God for whom, as for all, Christ died; and the need for a Christian ministry of love among homosexual persons.

In discussing the ordination of self-affirming, practicing homosexual persons, the task force has not been able to reach consensus. We have experienced sharp conflict. We have lived painful controversy. We have all moved from our starting positions. We have all grown toward each other in reconciliation. We love and respect each other. However, at the present time, we profoundly disagree on the fundamental question of whether homosexual behavior is sinful per se and on the dependent question of whether some otherwise-qualified, self-affirming, practicing homosexual persons may be ordained. Perhaps even more importantly, we disagree on the degree of pluralism that should characterize the church's approach to these matters.

The minority of the task force believes that all homosexual behavior in truth and beyond dispute is sinful per se. Therefore, like the incestuous adultery of which Paul spoke in I Cor. 5, homosexual behavior cannot be a matter of individual Christian conscience, and tolerance of continuing homosexual behavior clearly falls outside the bounds of permissible Christian pluralism. It would be best for the church's diversity-in-dialogue to focus its energies and resources on such issues as the overcoming of homophobia within the church and the developing of appropriate ministries for homosexual persons. However, as long as genuine doubt about the sinfulness of all homosexual behavior continues in the minds of some members, officers, and leaders of the church, ongoing free discussion within the church, which at least bears the valuable dividend of significant theological dialogue, is much preferable to divisive and uncharitable exercises of discipline to stop it. Nonetheless, forbearance and concern for peace must not temper truth and discipline. The prerequisite for continuing discussion must be the church's clear call for repentance on the part of all who continue in the practice of homosexual behavior. Therefore, the minority of the task force believes that the 190th General Assembly (1978) should adopt alternative action (3) (in Section B, 1 above) and should authoritatively advise presbyteries not to ordain self-acknowledged, practicing homosexual persons as incompatible with our denomination's Constitution.

The majority of the task force believes that homosexual behavior is not sinful per se and that therefore self-affirming, practicing homosexual persons may be considered for ordination. However, the majority, acknowledging the pluralism of Models A through D and the division of Christian conscience within the church, has no wish to impose its understanding of truth on others and would ask from others the same consideration. The majority holds that the moral ambiguity in which the church finds itself requires that formal dialogue and discussion sanctioned and supported by the denomination and its judicatories continue among all parties on the matters of sinfulness and ordination as well as on the matters of homophobia and appropriate ministries. Therefore, the majority of the task force believes that the 190th General Assembly (1978) should adopt alternative action (5) (in Section B, 1 above) and should refrain from offering an authoritative interpretation of the principles of the Constitution that would limit the freedom of congregations, sessions, and presbyteries to discuss the moral quality of homosexual relationships; to interpret the Bible and the Constitution in this matter as they feel led by the Spirit to do; to call, ordain, and install those (and only those) whom they in good conscience can; and to submit all actions to the ongoing testing of the Spirit.

If the 190th General Assembly (1978) does recommend continuing freedom of discussion and action by adopting alternative action (5), the following eleven questions, in the opinion of the task force, will become central to the ongoing dialogue, particularly as presbyteries, congregations, and elders are asked to consider the ordination of particular homosexual persons.*

(1) *What is the gestalt (or physical and psychosocial configuration) of a person's homosexuality?*** Is it a consciously chosen statement about the general undesirability of heterosexual relationships? Is it a fixed, determined, and unchosen psychosocial condition of complex origins? Is it manifestly pathological (that is, irrational, ego-destructive, or socially destructive)? Is it a stable, well adjusted, mature condition in which self-giving love is expressed? Does it dominate the person's self-identity, and if so, is the domination neurotic or prophetic? Does the gestalt play an important but proportionate role in the person's self-identity, and if not, is the disproportion forced upon the person by a hostile social environment? Does the gestalt represent fundamental alienation from God in the person's life? Does it point to the sanctifying work of the Spirit? What are the person's feelings about his or her homosexuality? Is the person cheerful or depressed, serene or anxious, contented or guilt-ridden?

(2) *What, if any, is a homosexual person's need for counseling or other therapeutic ministry?* Does the person desire reorientation to heterosexuality or help in achieving a celibate lifestyle? What is the prognosis for such a change? Should the church encourage a homosexual person to seek change, and should it provide a counseling and therapeutic ministry oriented toward change? Should the church encourage a homosexual person who seeks counseling to make her or his own decisions regarding therapeutic goals, and should it provide a nondirective counseling ministry?

(3) *Why do heterosexual Christians respond to homosexual Christians the way they do (whatever that way may be)?* Are they secure in their own gender identity? Are they acting to defend, justify, or camouflage their own sexual conduct? Are they well-informed on homosexuality and well-versed in Bible, theology, and ethics? Are they guided by stereotype, untypical experience, or misinformation? Are they motivated by earnest concern for righteousness before God? Are they motivated by unwillingness to judge Christian virtue? Do they have too narrow or too broad a definition of acceptable male behavior (male gender schema) and acceptable female behavior (female gender schema)?

(4) *How, if at all, does the church define an ethical homosexual lifestyle?* What, *if anything,* can be accepted as standards for "exemplary," "worthy," and "blameless" conduct? Does the church lift up and transfer to a homosexual lifestyle the traditional standards for an ethical heterosexual lifestyle? If so, does it sanction and bless a faithful, permanent homosexual union in some liturgical celebration? Does the church define some standards for a homosexual lifestyle differently from those for a heterosexual lifestyle in recognition that some physical, psychological, and social differences exist between same-sex and other-sex relationships?

(5) *If living an active homosexual lifestyle is a matter of free Christian conscience (like eating meat sacrificed to idols (Romans 14; I Cor. 8, 10:23–33)), what responsibility do active homosexual Christians of "strong conscience" have toward Christians of "weak conscience" who take serious offense at overt homosexual behavior?* Should self-affirming, practicing homosexual Christians limit their freedom out of loving deference to the scruples of others? If so, in what ways and to what extent? Should they limit their openness and visibility—perhaps by not seeking ordination at the present time or by couples' separating into different congregations? Should homosexual Christians remain "transparently themselves" but without "saying it loud—gay and proud"? Or do self-affirming, practicing homosexual Christians have a responsiblity to live openly and prophetically in order to challenge and transform the scruples of others? How best can self-acknowledged, practicing homosexual Christians both affirm themselves and advance the fellowship of the church?

If living an active homosexual lifestyle is the conscientious expression of biological and social processes whereby persons have acquired their homosexual orientation apart from any conscious determination of their own, what responsibility do active homosexual Christians have toward Christians who take serious offense at overt homosexual behavior?

(6) *How best can heterosexual Christians who are deeply disturbed in conscience by homosexual behavior both affirm themselves and advance the fellowship of the church?* Does advancing the fellowship in this matter require respecting others' consciences while nonetheless speaking one's own conscience as forcefully and forthrightly as possible? Does it require cultivating a love for others that overcomes theological difference and strives toward reconciliation and unity in diversity? Or does advancing the fellowship in this matter require an unwavering affirmation of received truth and an unceasing call for basic repentance? Does it require cultivating a firm, yet humble, dedication to God's holiness and to the church's purity, which cannot ignore theological difference nor sanction unity at any cost?

(7) *If homosexuality is sin, would sacraments administered by a self-acknowledged, practicing homosexual pastor be in any way invalid?* On this theological issue the task force is unanimous. The validity of the sacraments is *not* dependent on the personal merit or worth of the officiant. (See, for example, Calvin, *Institutes,* IV.xv.16, pp. 1315–1316.)

(8) *Does a person's homosexual experience appear to influence either positively or negatively his or her promise for ministering, counseling, or working with the poor, the sick, the friendless, the mourner, and any who may be in distress?* Is she or he able to identify with

*The sub-questions that follow under each question do not express every aspect of the question; they are suggestive rather than exhaustive. Nor are the sub-questions meant to serve as a definitive outline of inquiry for direction at a particular person. Some of the questions and sub-questions obviously arise more naturally from one position in the dialogue than from another. Nonetheless, it will be important for people of all persuasions to ask each question with an open mind and heart.

**This question, as well as some of the questions that follow, might also be applied, of course, to heterosexual candidates.

broken humanity in ways that those who have never known minority status, oppression, injustice, suffering, and anguish are not? Has being wounded nurtured and strengthened a potential healer, or has it left scars, bitterness, and turmoil? Is the person unable to move beyond the reality of his or her own pain to empathy for the very different realities of others' pain?

(9) *Does the homosexual orientation and lifestyle of a candidate for professional ministry appear to influence either positively or negatively her or his ability to perform premarital, marital, and postmarital counseling?* Does the candidate value others' heterosexual relationships and see the beauty of God potential in the relationships? Is he or she unable to help persons define and develop compatible and constructive gender roles? Does the candidate's experience of love, companionship, and sexuality appear to enhance or diminish her or his sensitivity to problems in heterosexual love, companionship, and sexuality?

(10) *Does a person's homosexual orientation and lifestyle appear to influence either positively or negatively his or her ability to work with children and young people?* Will the person's open, contented homosexual identity influence some children and youths to develop homosexual rather than heterosexual orientations? Do pastors, elders, and deacons generally have influence as sexual role models? Will the existence of positive homosexual role models itself cause homosexuality? Will the existence of positive homosexual role models relieve some heterosexual youths' fear of developing serious same-sex friendships lest they be labeled "queer"? Is the person being considered for ordination able or unable to help heterosexual youths develop wholesome, happy heterosexual lifestyles? Is the person able or unable to help youths who are already fixed psychosocially as homosexual to choose wisely and well among the possible options of celibacy, reorientation, and an active homosexual lifestyle? Is the person able or unable to counsel in a professional manner with youths who are genuinely confused about their sexual development and orientation?

(11) *What would the ordination of a self-acknowledged, practicing homosexual person say to the world in general and to the homosexual community in particular?* Would it proclaim God's love for the oppressed and God's mercy toward all? Would it strengthen or weaken the church's evangelistic and social witness within the homosexual community and the world at large? Would it reinforce self-satisfaction within the gay community, or would it call the gay community to ethical responsibility? Would it influence positively or negatively the reevaluation of marriage, family, and alternative lifestyles now occurring in our society? Would it demonstrate the moral decay of the church by being seen as a compromise with secular culture, or would the denial of ordination demonstrate the entrapment of the church in the ignorance and prejudice of the culture?

3. The Necessary Situation

As the church continues to address the issue of Christian approaches to homosexuality, it is necessary to preserve purity, peace, and unity. However, the task force is of two minds about the meaning of purity, peace, and unity in the present context and about the means of maintaining them.

a. Purity

The majority of the task force believes that if the 190th General Assembly (1978) were to state definitively that homosexual behavior per se is "sin" or is "not sin" and that self-affirming, practicing homosexual Christians are "not ordainable" or are "ordainable," then the church's highest judicatory would be rejecting the deeply felt theological convictions and strongly held biblical interpretations of one significant group or another within the church. The church's highest judicatory would be requiring numerous United Presbyterians to deny what they believe and to believe what they deny. The peace and unity of the church would be undermined in the name of unessential purity.

The essential purity of the church, the majority believes, lies in holding firm in the preaching and teaching of the church the *core* doctrines, such as "God's incarnation in Jesus Christ," "the resurrection," and "justification by faith alone," and by faithfully administering the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as means of grace. Proper administration of the sacraments is not at stake in the conflict over the ordination of self-affirming, practicing homosexual Christians. (See above, question (7).) Neither is one of the core doctrines. At stake is the ability of the church to remain open to an acceptable pluralism of mutually informing and correcting doctrines of biblical authority and interpretation. At stake is the ability of the church to remain open to an acceptable pluralism of mutually informing and correcting doctrines of creation. At stake is the ability of the church to remain open to an acceptable pluralism of mutually informing and correcting doctrines of the work of the Spirit in Scripture and in persons' lives. On these essential pluralisms the peace and unity of our church have depended for several decades.

The essential purity of the church, the majority believes, must not, indeed cannot, depend on enforcing universal subscription to any single interpretation of homosexual behavior. In dealing with this issue, the church is confronted by a genuine ambiguity in biblical interpretation and theology, and of data from psychotherapy and the empirical sciences. In times when the church is confronted by genuine ambiguity, the need for diversity-in-dialogue is greatest and the possibility of purity is least.

The minority of the task force believes that nothing in our understanding of the forms of homosexuality and nothing in the diversity of theories offered to explain the causes of these forms obliges us to move from the church's previous understanding that in faithfulness to the biblical witness, it should commend heterosexual marriage as the form of sexual activity which fulfills God's plan for our sexuality and that it should resist all expressions of active homosexuality as divergences from God's will. Concern for purity in the church's teaching and pastoral ministry obliges it to bear prophetic witness against sin and injustice as best it understands it. Although diversity of opinion about the sinfulness of homosexual behavior exists and will continue to exist within the United Presbyterian Church, by no means

have present study and experience revealed beyond reasonable doubt that homosexual behavior in some cases can be a legitimate expression of Christian love. It would be unwise, not to say spiritually dangerous, for the church on the basis of ambiguous evidence and testimony to change its historic position by removing its warning against all homosexual behavior and moving into uncharted regions of human behavior. The church dare not lead homosexual persons into behavior or allow them to continue in behavior that Scripture calls serious sin. The salvation of souls, as well as the purity of the church, is at stake. The church must in loving concern warn its members against serious sin: first, that the world may not stumble by seeing the church embrace the impenitent; second, that evil may not spread in the church by contagion; and third, that erring members may truly be led to repentance and restoration. (See Calvin, *Institutes,* IV.xii.5, pp. 1232–1234.)

"Sin is a deep compulsion to follow one's own desire rather than the expressed will of God." The teaching of this core doctrine of Reformed theology is, the minority believes, essential to the purity of the church. All homosexual behavior is such sin. In light of present knowledge and experience, the church dare not teach otherwise.

b. PEACE

Given the pluralism within the church and the present inability to reach agreement on answers or resolutions to many of the issues involved in ordaining self-affirming, practicing homosexual persons, no possible action by the General Assembly can end all conflict. For when persons of differing minds are interdependent, continuing conflict is inevitable. However, conflict need not be damaging to peace; it need not lead to immobilization, disruption, or schism. The church can channel its differences of opinion into creative, rather than destructive, forms of conflict. The task force unanimously agrees that indispensable to the peace of the church beyond the 190th General Assembly (1978) will be ongoing free discussion within the church of the issue of homosexuality.

To be sure, the minority believes that the 190th General Assembly (1978) must clearly reaffirm traditional truth as the precondition for ongoing free discussion, which may then bring from discord a peace consistent with truth. And the majority believes that the 190th General Assembly (1978) must clearly endorse the process of ongoing free discussion at all levels of the denomination as the precondition for the subsequent mutual discernment of truth, which may bring peace from discord. Nonetheless, all on the task force agree that "diversity continuing in earnest and faithful dialogue" is a form of creative conflict capable of generating within the church increased intelligence, thoughtfulness, theological acumen, commitment, enthusiasm, motivation for problem-solving, and, in the end, cohesiveness. We agree because we have experienced this result in our own work.

If the peace of the church is defined as "the absence of all controversy," then peace cannot be had on the issue of homosexuality (nor on many other issues confronting the church). If, however, the peace of the church is defined as "its diversity continuing in earnest and faithful dialogue toward agreement on truth," then peace can be had; and these will be its elements:

(1) A common commitment to come personally to understand the issue of homosexuality. Such a commitment requires serious biblical and theological reflection. Have I analyzed and defined my Christian presuppositions? It also calls for reading some psychotherapeutic and empirical literature. Have I exposed myself to concrete data and to the results of counseling experiences?

(2) A common commitment to come personally to know and understand self-acknowledged homosexual persons. Such a commitment obliges me to suspend my stereotypes and open my eyes and ears, my mind and heart. It asks me to risk developing genuine acquaintances and possible friendships with the self-acknowledged homosexual persons whom I encounter in the course of my daily routines. It asks me to invite self-acknowledged homosexual Christians and inquirers to attend my church and to participate in its life. It asks me to speak and listen to the self-acknowledged homosexual Christians who may already be members, deacons, elders, and pastors in my church and neighboring churches.

(3) A common commitment to come to understand my personal fears and anxieties about homosexuality and homosexual persons. What are these fears and anxieties, really? Where did I learn them? Are they rational or irrational? Are they based on fact or fiction? Are they just or unjust? Are they important or unimportant?

(4) A common commitment to come to know and understand my "opponents" in the dialogue. Such a commitment calls me to refrain from stereotype and parody; to demur from labeling others' motives; to perceive the uprightness of others' hearts; to articulate others' arguments as well as they can; and to empathize with the diverse modes of expression that characterize others' cultural backgrounds.

(5) A common commitment to practice a sense of humor in honor of my fallibility.

In such common commitments to diversity's continuing in earnest and faithful dialogue toward agreement on truth lies the hope for the peace of the church.

c. UNITY

In open hearings, many United Presbyterians expressed to the task force their fear that the issue of ordaining a self-affirming, practicing homosexual person to the professional ministry would destroy the unity of the church and lead to great losses in membership and financial support. It is indeed the case that a number of United Presbyterians are sufficiently disturbed about the possible ordination of a self-affirming, practicing homosexual person that they threaten separation or divisive forms of punitive action unless the 190th General Assembly (1978) authoritatively advises against such ordination. It is also the case that a number of homosexual United Presbyterians, both open and closeted, and also a number of empathetic heterosexual United Presbyterians are sufficiently disturbed about the church's continuing failure to consider the ordination of otherwise-qualified, self-affirming, practicing homosexual persons

that they threaten separation if the 190th General Assembly (1978) does authoritatively advise against such ordination.

Potential losses of membership and money are, and always have been, poor arguments against actions taken in accordance with the strong conscience of the church. However, at the present time, the conscience of the church is not at all unified on the issue confronting us. Indeed, the conscience of the church is seriously and significantly divided. The principal task of the church, therefore, is not to enforce its conscience but to establish it; and the maintenance of unity is necessary to the building of a more unified conscience. In situations such as this, judicatories, agencies, individual members, and ministers have a primary obligation to care for the health of the body of Christ, to build up its fellowship of believers, and to avoid dismembering the church. On this principle the task force agrees unanimously. However, we disagree on how best to maintain the necessary unity in the interval between the present moment and the attainment of a more unified conscience.

(1) *The Majority View.* The unity of the United Presbyterian Church is founded upon our common ultimate loyalty to Jesus Christ, our common reception of the sacraments, our common subscription to the essential doctrines of faith, our common waiting upon God's word and God's Spirit, our common awareness of fallibility, our common need for grace and forgiveness, our common sense of process and polity, our common engagement in dialogue and admonition, and our common trust that no judicatory would consciously act to destroy these values.

No denomination is without sin. No denomination is without error. No denomination is without need for correction. Christian unity cannot be found in the illusory pursuit of "the Church of Perfect Purity." Such pursuit is idolatry and breeds a factiousness that is itself a "work of the flesh." (Gal. 5:20.)

Every church is confronted by the issue of homosexuality. Most churches have homosexual officers, whether overt or covert. Most churches have homosexual members, whether self-affirming or closeted. The dialogue of diversity is with us all. It cannot be avoided; it cannot be escaped; it can only be faced.

The polity of the United Presbyterian Church offers us the necessary framework for addressing our diversity while maintaining our peace and unity. The Constitution of our church guarantees that no congregation need elect, nor elder ordain, a homosexual person as deacon or ruling elder against their conscientious reading of Scripture and understanding of theology. It guarantees that no presbytery need approve and ordain a homosexual person as a minister of the word against its convictions. It guarantees that no congregation need call a homosexual pastor against its will. Yet it also guarantees to all presbyteries, congregations, and elders the freedom to follow their particular understanding of the Spirit's leading and to approve (elect), ordain, and call a homosexual person whom, after due examination, they deem gifted, worthy, and called by God.

If self-affirming, practicing homosexual persons should be ordained by presbyteries and called by congregations after earnest study and fervent prayer, then the church's dialogue does not and must not end. For then the church must stand watch, prepared to judge with open mind and heart the results of those acts, prepared to test their spirit. If the acts should prove by their results to be error, let the church learn from that—as it has from other errors—and let our dialogue of diversity be shaped by that. If the act should prove by its results to be truth, let the church learn from that—as it has from other truths—and let our dialogue of diversity be shaped by that.

Is there experience to justify the optimism of the majority view that unity can survive the possibility, or indeed the actuality, of ordination? We believe there is, although it is, perforce, limited and comes through experiences of denominations that obviously differ in some ways from our own. However, these differences should not be overemphasized. Theological arguments similar to those given by United Presbyterians have been given on both sides of their disputes over the ordaining of a homosexual candidate. Predictions about the likely consequences of ordination were also similar to those with which we are familiar. In the record of their experiences it is clear that the predictions were inaccurate. The ordination of self-affirming homosexual persons has led to little, if any, decline in membership or giving and has not prevented these churches from doing their mission work.

On April 30, 1972, the Golden Gate Association of the Northern California Conference of the United Church of Christ voted 62–34 to ordain an affirmed homosexual person—William R. Johnson—to the professional ministry. The vote followed a year-long process of study and discussion at all levels of the Association. (See "Learning from Experience.") Three of the 31 churches of the Association by action of their governing councils disassociated themselves from this particular action and boycotted the service of ordination. Mr. Johnson was ordained on June 25, 1972.

In response to the media coverage of the ordination, the Conference Minister (comparable to a synod executive) received over 150 letters, fairly evenly divided between support, criticism, and the seeking of further information. Some examples (as quoted in "Learning from Experience," pp. 11–13) follow:

> One minister wrote, "I cannot, at this moment, agree with the decision; but I do know that it was not made lightly, and was made in good faith. It is my fervent prayer that the people of our Conference will realize this and rally to support the very Christian attitude that was taken in this whole process."
>
> One young woman, recently rejoining the church after a 14-year absence, wrote, "This is such a positive step for the Church—acceptance of the individual is the first step toward a loving community. . . . I never thought I would be saying this—but it is, indeed, good to be back in Church again!"
>
> From the executive of an ecumenical organization came these words: "Congratulations on the United Church of Christ coming to terms with Bill Johnson's ordination! . . .you should know there are hundreds if not thousands of us in the church who feel a little bit better about our denomination today."
>
> . . .a retired UCC denominational executive wrote: "The action of the Golden Gate Association may not be the first of its precise kind, but it and any other like it may open a Pandora's box of other problems. It will certainly encourage more of the somewhat vaudevillian exhibitionism already ventured by the 'Gay Liberationists'. . . . And of course for the Church, through an official body and its acts, to appear to confirm as normal and acceptable what, biblically and physiologically, not to say psychologically, are clearly not normal; and to seem to condone if not to bless homosexual 'marriages' would not such actions be major contribu-

> tions to the further undermining of the whole fabric of marriage and the family as they have predominated back far longer than through the Christian centuries?"
>
> . . .from a Church Council: "We feel that the Holy Scriptures are very explicit on the matter of homosexuality (Lev. 18:22; Rom. 1:26,27; I Cor. 6:9,10), and if the Scriptures are not to be accepted as our standard for Christian standards of conduct and morality, then what is our authority on such matters? We do have Christian compassion for such individuals. But we feel that biblical standards must be maintained."
>
> . . .from a Midwest adult class in a Lutheran church: "Last Sunday our adult discussion class exchanged ideas on the recent voting of the United Church of Christ on the ordination of William Johnson. Our class expressed a great variety of opinions. Many of the class members felt we must be open-minded and trust the work of the Holy Spirit. We decided to ask you questions; hopefully you can give us the rationale behind this decision."

Mr. Johnson himself received over 250 letters, only six of which were negative. Within one of the affirmative letters, from the 22-year-old son of a missionary, was this question:

> . . .being gay I felt guilty whenever I went to church. I felt that I was letting my folks down by being gay. I still have a guilt complex. . . . What I would like you to tell me is this—Is homosexuality a sin? Can one be a true Christian and still be a homosexual? ("Learning from Experience," p. 13.)

A 16-year-old United Church of Christ youth wrote:

> I think you are very brave. I hope someday I will have the courage to do as you have done. I know that my family will disown me when I tell them I am a homosexual, so I must wait until I can support myself. ("Learning from Experience," p. 14.)

The diversity of these responses to the ordination of William Johnson is identical with the diversity of discussion in our own denomination, and in the years following the ordination serious and profound dialogue has continued on the subject at all levels of the United Church of Christ. Through it all, the purity, peace, and unity of the denomination remain intact; and, as reported in the United Church of Christ Year Books, no significant change in membership or giving trends followed the ordination, either at the Conference or denominational level.

On January 10, 1977, Bishop Paul Moore of the Episcopal Diocese of New York ordained Ellen Marie Barrett to the priesthood in full knowledge of her affirmed homosexual orientation. Unfortunately, the impact upon the Episcopal Church of the ordination of this particular homosexual person can never be properly assessed, for the same ordination is so inextricably linked to the Episcopal Church's larger struggle over the ordination of women to the priesthood.

The United Presbyterian Church has many homosexual pastors. Almost all are closeted. A few have become "transparent"—that is, on the one hand they no longer maintain an elaborate camouflage, but on the other hand they do not specifically inform their congregations of their sexual orientation. At least one became open to his congregation without seriously disrupting its peace and unity.

The stability of unity, membership, and finances in the United Church of Christ and in the one United Presbyterian congregation just mentioned is as it should be and as it can be after the 190th General Assembly (1978)—if the ordained leaders of our denomination provide leadership for peace and unity rather than for discord and division. The issue of the ordination of self-acknowledged, practicing homosexual persons threatens the unity of the United Presbyterian Church only if we allow it to undermine our common ultimate loyalty to Jesus Christ, our common reception of the sacraments, our common subscription to the essential doctrines of faith, our common waiting upon God's word and God's Spirit, our common awareness of fallibility, our common need for grace and forgiveness, our common sense of process and polity, our common engagement in dialogue and admonition, and our common trust that no judicatory would consciously act to destroy these values. Open to God's grace, such undermining will not happen and unity will be preserved. In the interval between the present moment and the attainment of a more unified conscience, judicatories, agencies, and individual members and ministers will care for the health of the body of Christ, will build up the fellowship of believers, and will avoid dismembering the church.

(2) *The Minority View.* The minority does not share the optimism of the majority that peace and unity will be preserved if the 190th General Assembly (1978) should adopt alternative action (5). The church must be careful not to be misled by the example of one United Presbyterian congregation out of 8,675 or by a supposed parallel to our situation in another denomination. The United Church of Christ is not confessionally oriented, nor as theologically conservative as the United Presbyterian Church. The congregational form of government creates a spirit of congregations' independence and individuality, in contrast to our connectional form of government, which creates a spirit of congregations' interdependence and mutual responsibility. What happens in one congregation or region of the United Church of Christ is not taken with such great seriousness or concern by other congregations or regions of the United Church of Christ as is the case in the United Presbyterian Church. Furthermore, the United Church of Christ has no organized conservative movement comparable to the Presbyterian Lay Committee, the Presbyterians United for Biblical Concerns, or the Presbyterian Charismatic Communion.

The minority in no way endorses such talk of separation or schism. Indeed, the minority believes that such talk harms the body of Christ by threatening the peace and unity of the church, by increasing homophobia within the church, and by working against the establishment of valid Christian ministries to the homosexual community. Yet to ignore the danger signals of separation and schism, as the majority appears to do, would be most imprudent. In deciding how best to bridge the interval between the present situation of a seriously divided conscience within the church and the attainment of a more unified conscience, the strength of conservative feeling on this issue must be recognized and reckoned with.

The church must not be led by threats of separation to indifference toward the plight of the many homosexual ministers who already exist within our church. We must not be led by threats of separation to indifference to the situation of the many United Presbyterian families that include a homosexual member. We must care deeply about them and about the homosexual United Presbyterians who have come out of the closet courageously to engage the church in dialogue, thereby jeopardizing their prospects for ordination. However, we also must not be

led by threats of separation into a mood of rash defiance toward "separatists," saying, "Damn the torpedoes! Full speed ahead!" The minority believes that in truth the church cares most responsibly for homosexual persons when, in accordance with Scripture and received tradition, it challenges both them and homophobic persons within the church to repentance. The minority believes that in truth the adoption of alternative action (3) can be the only sure basis for maintaining purity within the church in the immediate future, and that in truth the maintaining of purity can be the only sure basis for maintaining peace and unity within the church in the immediate future.

But in adopting alternative action (3), let the church not close the door to continuing dialogue on the issue of homosexuality. Let us not lapse either into the illusion of unanimity or into the reality of stern discipline. The diversity of conscience within the church is genuine. The door to continuing dialogue must be kept open so that homophobia may be met and overcome, so that ministry to homosexual persons may be shaped most broadly and effectively, so that the profound discussion of basic theological issues, which has so newly begun, may continue, and—yes—so that new insights may come if there are new insights to be received.

Let there be purity, as best we understand it, as the solid base for the peace and unity that are indispensable for the progressive unification of conscience on this issue. Open to God's grace, there can be purity, peace, and unity. Open to God's grace, in the interval between the present division of conscience and the attainment of a more unified conscience, judicatories, agencies, individual members, and ministers will care for the health of the body of Christ, will build up the fellowship of believers, and will avoid the dismembering of the church.

d. CONCLUDING WORD

As the task force concludes this phase of our work in preparation for the 190th General Assembly (1978), we remain divided in understanding the meaning of the purity, peace, and unity of the church and the means of maintaining them. Yet we trust that in the months and years ahead God will show the church the way and will lead all of us in it. Open to God's grace, we shall all find the faithfulness and self-control to love our opponents in dialogue. Open to God's grace, we shall find the patience and goodness to pray both for them and for ourselves. Open to God's grace, we shall find the gentleness and the joy to worship together in praise, confession, and supplication. Open to God's grace, we shall submit to Christ, who is our Lord. Therein lie our purity, our peace, and our unity.

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Policy Statement and Recommendations

Introduction

The General Assembly was asked by the Presbyteries of New York City and of the Palisades to give "definitive guidance" concerning the eligibility for ordination to the professional ministry of persons who openly acknowledge homosexual orientation and practice. One thing has become very clear in consideration of this request. The church must respond to this issue. Numbers of persons both within the church and outside it experience homosexuality, either as a transient part of their growth as persons or as a continuing force in their own lives or in the lives of family members and friends. New data in psychology and the social sciences have appeared that challenge the church's traditional posture on this matter. The time has come for the church to confront this issue, to reexamine and refresh its theological understanding of homosexuality in the light of God's revelation to us in Jesus Christ, and to renew its practical approach to mission and ministry among homosexual persons.

The issue submitted to this General Assembly is a call for guidance to individual Christian persons, congregations, and presbyteries concerning the status of self-affirming, practicing homosexual persons within the church. Specifically, the presbyteries seek guidance on the matter of ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. Difficult questions are involved in this request. Should the General Assembly foster the creation of a new situation in the church, in which practicing homosexual persons would be free to affirm their lifestyle publicly and to obtain the church's blessing upon this through ordination? Or should the church reaffirm its historic opposition to homosexual behavior? These questions must be dealt with in the context of the whole life and mission of the church. To answer them, we must examine the nature of homosexuality according to current scientific understandings, interpreted within the context of our theological understandings of God's purpose for human life. To this purpose, in all its rich variety, the Scripture attests. Church membership, ordination, pluralism and unity in the church, and the Christian response in ministry and mission must then, in turn, be examined.

Homosexuality Within a Theological Context

New data and hypotheses in psychology, sociology, endocrinology, and the other secular disciplines cannot in themselves determine a shift in the church's posture on this issue. Very frequently these disciplines shed new light upon our understanding of homosexuality and how the church should respond to it. Frequently the results of scientific inquiry are tentative and inconclusive, neutral in their theological and ethical implications, or even weighted with unspoken values and assumptions that are misleading against the background of biblical faith. Therefore, we must address the task of theologically interpreting these extrabiblical data, while at the same time renewing our understanding of Scripture and tradition in the light of those data in the sciences.

Medical and psychological theories concerning homosexuality and its causes are complex and often contradictory. Among the multitude of hypotheses and conclusions currently being entertained, a small but significant body of facts emerges that enlarges our understanding of what homosexuality is and how we should respond to it. It seems clear that homosexuality is primarily a matter of affectional attraction that cannot be defined simply in terms of genital acts, although the homosexual orientation may be so expressed.

Most human beings experience occasional homosexual attraction, although not always consciously. It is reasonably certain that somewhere between 5 and 10 percent of the human population is exclusively or predominantly homosexual in orientation. Exclusively homosexual persons appear to be remarkably resistant to reorientation through most psychiatric methods. Most exclusively homosexual persons believe that their condition is irreversible. Some secular therapists working with those motivated to change report some success in reversal, and counselors employing both the resources of Christian faith and psychotherapeutic techniques report a higher rate of success. It appears that two critical variables are involved. First, do therapist and client believe that change is possible? Second, how convinced is the client that change is desirable?

The causes of homosexuality now appear to be remarkably numerous and diverse. There is no one explanation for homosexual affectional preference, and thus neither the persons involved nor their parents can be singled out as responsible for the homosexual orientation. Most authorities now assume that both heterosexuality and homosexuality result primarily from psychological and social factors affecting human beings during their growth toward maturity, with some possible influence from biological factors. Most homosexual persons do not consciously choose their affectional preference, although they do face the choice of whether to accept it or to seek change, and of whether to express it in genital acts or to remain celibate. However, although homosexual affectional preference is not always the result of conscious choice, it may be interpreted as part of the involuntary and often unconscious drive away from God's purposes that characterizes fallen human nature, falling short of God's intended patterns for human sexuality.

Human sexuality has a dynamic quality. Within the constraints of nature, nurture serves to transform both sexual identity and intersexual preference. Our sexuality is vulnerable to shaping influences from many directions.

As the embryo develops, the single root organism unfolds and differentiates, sometimes making a boy, sometimes a girl, sometimes a sexually ambiguous being. Following an initial gender assignment, we believe and nurture ourselves and one another into authentic or inauthentic sexual beings.

We find here a parallel to the Genesis account of the creation of humankind, which speaks of the precious and precarious balance of male and female life together that perpetually needs both our affirmation and God's upholding grace. Genesis offers polemic against deviations from the wise separation of humankind into man and woman. It is this separation that makes union possible. In creation, God separates woman from man so that they are constituted with yearning for each other. Becoming one flesh they portray the glory of his image in the earth.

To say that God created humankind male and female, called man and woman to join in partnership as one flesh, and commanded them to multiply (Genesis 1:27–28; 2:24)

is to describe how God intended loving companionship between a man and a woman to be a fundamental pattern of human relationship and the appropriate context for male-female genital sexual expression. However, to say that God created humankind male and female, called man and woman to join in partnership as one flesh, and commanded them to multiply is not to state that God intended to limit the possibility for meaningful life to heterosexual marriage. Jesus' own celibate lifestyle and his commitment to his own ministry rather than to the biological family (Matthew 12:46–50; Mark 3:31–35; Luke 8:19–21) demonstrates the blessing of God upon life lived outside the covenant of marriage.

This biological and theological argument has implications for homosexuality. It appears that one explanation of the process in which persons develop homosexual preferences and behavior is that men and women fall away from their intended being because of distorted or insufficent belief in who they are. They are not adequately upheld in being male and female, in being heterosexual, by self-belief and the belief of a supporting community.

Therefore, it appears that what is really important is not what homosexuality is but what we believe about it. Our understanding of its nature and causes is inconclusive, medically and psychologically. Our beliefs about homosexuality thus become paramount in importance. Do we value it, disvalue it, or find it morally neutral? Do we shape an environment that encourages movement toward homosexuality or one that nurtures heterosexual becoming?

We conclude that homosexuality is not God's wish for humanity. This we affirm, despite the fact that some of its forms may be deeply rooted in an individual's personality structure. Some persons are exclusively homosexual in orientation. In many cases homosexuality is more a sign of the brokenness of God's world than of willful rebellion. In other cases homosexual behavior is freely chosen or learned in environments where normal development is thwarted. Even where the homosexual orientation has not been consciously sought or chosen, it is neither a gift from God nor a state nor a condition like race; it is a result of our living in a fallen world.

How are we to find the light and freedom promised to us by our Lord through the Holy Spirit in such a world? Where do we find norms for authentic life, which in truth transcend the conditioning of history and culture, and the power to live by them?

We dare begin no other place than with the living Word, Jesus Christ, who in risen power transcends time and space and the limitations of our values, norms, and assumptions to confront, judge, and redeem us. It is here that all theological confession and affirmation must begin—in the light of God as revealed to us in the incarnate and living Word, Jesus Christ. It is his exposure of our sin, his obedient sacrificial love, and his being raised in power to continue his activity of redemption of this world (I Cor. 15:20–28) that brings us new light. This same God in Jesus Christ comes to make us whole, to redeem creation, and to restore it to the goodness proclaimed at creation. Yet the prelude to this redemption is divine judgment.

To look at the Christ is to see at once the brokenness of the world in which we live and the brokenness of our own lives. This comes as the supreme crisis in our life.

Yet, in the moment of this crisis, the Spirit of God brings the confirmation of divine forgiveness, moves us to respond in faith, repentance, and obedience, and initiates the new life in Christ.

Jesus Christ calls us out of the alienation and isolation of our fallen state into the freedom of new life. This new life redeems us as sexual beings but is impossible without repentance. To claim that God's love for us removes divine judgment of us is to eliminate the essence of divine love and to exchange grace for romantic sentimentality. There is a necessary judgment in God's love—else it cannot redeem. It was this Christ who said to the woman in adultery, "Go and sin no more" (John 8:1–12), and to the rich young ruler: "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor . . . and come, follow me." (Luke 18:22 and parallels.)

Jesus Christ calls us out of the alienation, brokenness, and isolation of our fallen state into the freedom of new life in Christ. We deny that this new life liberates us to license and affirm that it frees and empowers us for lives of obedience whereby all of life becomes subject to his Lordship.

Scripture and Homosexuality

We have already indicated that we must examine scientific data but must move beyond them in order to understand what our sexuality means and how it should be expressed. We anchor our understanding of homosexuality in the revelation in Scripture of God's intention for human sexuality.

In order to comprehend the biblical view of homosexuality, we cannot simply limit ourselves to those texts that directly address this issue. We must first understand something of what the Scriptures teach about human sexuality in general. As we examine the whole framework of teaching bearing upon our sexuality from Genesis onward, we find that homosexuality is a contradiction of God's wise and beautiful pattern for human sexual relationships revealed in Scripture and affirmed in God's ongoing will for our life in the Spirit of Christ. It is a confusion of sexual roles that mirrors the tragic inversion in which men and women worship the creature instead of the Creator. God created us male and female to display in clear diversityand balance the range of qualities in God's own nature. The opening chapters of Genesis show that sexual union as "one flesh" is established within the context of companionship and the formation of the family. Nature confirms revelation in the functional compatibility of male and female genitalia and the natural process of procreation and family continuity.

Human sin has deeply affected the processes by which sexual orientation is formed, with the result that none of us, heterosexual or homosexual, fulfill perfectly God's plan for our sexuality. This makes it all the more imperative for revelation to make clear for us how our sexual relationships are to be conducted so as to please God and challenge us to seek God's will instead of following our own. Though none of us will ever achieve perfect fulfillment of God's will, all Christians are responsible to view their sins as God views them and to strive against them. To evade this responsibility is to permit the church to model for the world forms of sexual behavior that may seriously injure individuals, families, and the whole fabric of human

society. Homosexual persons who will strive toward God's revealed will in this area of their lives, and make use of all the resources of grace, can receive God's power to transform their desires or arrest their active expression.

Within the context of general biblical teaching on human sexuality, a number of passages dealing specifically with homosexuality are significant for our response to this issue. These are, of course, complementary to the wider biblical themes of creation, fall, and redemption.

Three Scriptures specifically address the issue of homosexual behavior between consenting males: Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13, and Romans 1:26–27. Romans 1:26–27 also addresses the issue of homosexual behavior between consenting females. These three passages stand in an integral and complementary relationship. Leviticus 20:13 regards homosexual behavior as an "abomination."

In the Reformed tradition, the Leviticus passages are considered part of the moral law and thus are different in kind from Levitical proscriptions against certain foods, for instance, which belong to the ritual law. Jesus declared "all foods clean" (Mark 7:19)—one declaration among many that the ritual law of the Old Testament is transcended and fulfilled in him. Moral law in the New Testament is not the means of salvation, for that is Christ alone. Rather, obedience to the moral law is a fruit of grace and salvation.

Genesis 19:1–29 and Judges 19:16–26 show that homosexual rape is a violation of God's justice. II Peter 2:6–10 and Jude 7 suggest a wider context of homosexual practice in Sodom, implying that such rape was but one expression of prior homosexual practice in the population.

Romans 1:26–27 speaks to the problem of homosexual passion, describing it as "dishonorable," as well as to homosexual behavior, which is described as "unnatural." By "unnatural" the Scripture does not mean contrary to custom, nor contrary to the preference of a particular person, but rather contrary to that order of universal human sexual nature that God intended in Genesis 1 and 2.

We emphasize that Paul here includes homosexual behavior in a larger catalog of sins, which includes pride, greed, jealousy, disobedience to parents, and deceit. Homosexual behavior is no greater a sin and no less a sin than these.

Two other texts, I Corinthians 6:9–10 and I Timothy 1:9–10, show further New Testament opposition to homosexual behavior. I Corinthians probably distinguishes between the more passive partners or catamites (*malakoi*) and the more active partners (*ārsenokoitai*). Homosexual relationships in the Hellenistic world were widespread. We may safely assume that some were characterized by tenderness, commitment, and altruism. Yet the New Testament declares that all homosexual practice is incompatible with Christian faith and life. No Scriptures speak of homosexuality as granted by God. No Scriptures permit or condone any of the forms of homosexuality. In Matthew 19:1–12, Jesus reaffirms God's intention for sexual intercourse, enduring marriage between husband and wife, and affirms godly celibacy for those not entering the marriage covenant.

The biblical revelation to Israel, reaffirmed in the teaching of Jesus and Paul, portrayed in the *theology and human creation*, specifically reflected in the ethical teaching in both the Old and New Testaments, and confirmed in nature, clearly indicates that genital sexual expression is meant to occur within the covenant of heterosexual marriage. Behavior that is pleasing to God cannot simply be defined as that which pleases others or expresses our own strong needs and identity; it must flow out of faithful and loving obedience to God. Sin cannot simply be defined as behavior that is selfish or lustful. Many unselfish deeds ignore God's expressed intentions for our lives. Homosexual Christians who fail to recognize God's revealed intent for sexual behavior and who move outside God's will in this area of their lives may show many gifts and graces. They may evidence more grace than heterosexual believers who so readily stand in judgment over them. This does not mean that God approves their behavior in the area in which they are failing to be obedient.

To conclude that the Spirit contradicts in our experience what the Spirit clearly said in Scripture is to set Spirit against Spirit and to cut ourselves loose from any objective test to confirm that we are following God and not the spirits in our culture or our own fallible reason. The church that destroys the balance between Word and Spirit, so carefully constructed by the Reformers to insure that we follow none other than Jesus Christ who is the Word, will soon lose its Christian substance and become indistinguishable from the world. We have been charged to seek "new light from God's Word," not "new light" contrary to God's Word.

Church Membership

Persons who manifest homosexual behavior must be treated with the profound respect and pastoral tenderness due all people of God. There can be no place within the Christian faith for the response to homosexual persons of mingled contempt, hatred, and fear that is called homophobia.

Homosexual persons are encompassed by the searching love of Christ. The church must turn from its fear and hatred to move toward the homosexual community in love and to welcome homosexual inquirers to its congregations. It should free them to be candid about their identity and convictions, and it should also share honestly and humbly with them in seeking the vision of God's intention for the sexual dimensions of their lives.

As persons repent and believe, they become members of Christ's body. The church is not a citadel of the morally perfect; it is a hospital for sinners. It is the fellowship where contrite, needy people rest their hope for salvation on Christ and his righteousness. Here in community they seek and receive forgiveness and new life. The church must become the nurturing community so that all whose lives come short of the glory of God are converted, reoriented, and built up into Christian maturity. It may be only in the context of loving community, appreciation, pastoral care, forgiveness, and nurture that homosexual persons can come to a clear understanding of God's pattern for their sexual expression.

There is room in the church for all who give honest affirmation to the vows required for membership in the church. Homosexual persons who sincerely affirm "Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior" and "I intend to be his disciple, to obey his word, and to show his love" should not be excluded from membership.

Ordination

To be an ordained officer is to be a human instrument, touched by divine powers but still an earthen vessel. As portrayed in Scripture, the officers set before the church and community an example of piety, love, service, and moral integrity. Officers are not free from repeated expressions of sin. Neither are members and officers free to adopt a lifestyle of conscious, continuing, and unresisted sin in any area of their lives. For the church to ordain a self-affirming, practicing homosexual person to ministry would be to act in contradiction to its charter and calling in Scripture, setting in motion both within the church and society serious contradictions to the will of Christ.

The repentant homosexual person who finds the power of Christ redirecting his or her sexual desires toward a married heterosexual commitment, or finds God's power to control his or her desires and to adopt a celibate lifestyle, can certainly be ordained, all other qualifications being met. Indeed, such candidates must be welcomed and be free to share their full identity. Their experience of hatred and rejection may have given them a unique capacity for love and sensitivity as wounded healers among heterosexual Christians, and they may be incomparably equipped to extend the church's outreach to the homosexual community.

We believe that Jesus Christ intends the ordination of officers to be a sign of hope to the church and the world. Therefore our present understanding of God's will precludes the ordination of persons who do not repent of homosexual practice.

Pluralism and Unity in the Church

We of the 190th General Assembly (1978) realize that not all United Presbyterians can in conscience agree with our conclusions. Some are persuaded that there are forms of homosexual behavior that are not sinful and that persons who practice these forms can legitimately be ordained.

This is wholly in keeping with the diversity of theological viewpoint and the pluralism of opinion that characterize the United Presbyterian Church. We are concerned not to stifle these diverging opinions and to encourage those who hold them to remain within the church. As Paul clearly teaches in Eph. 4:1–16, as members of Christ's body we desperately need one another. None of us is perfect. No opinion or decision is irreformable. Nor do we mean to close further study of homosexuality among the presbyteries and congregations. Quite the contrary, the action we recommend to the judicatories includes a firm direction to study this matter further, so that fear and hatred of homosexual persons may be healed and mission and ministry to homosexual persons strengthened and increased. The pluralism that can bring paralyzing weakness to the church when groups pursue their vision in isolation from one another can bring health and vigor when they practice pluralism-in-dialogue.

We want this dialogue to continue. Nevertheless, we judge that it cannot effectively be pursued in the uncertainty and insecurity that would be generated by the Assembly's silence on this matter at this time. On the basis of our understanding that the practice of homosexuality is sin, we are concerned that homosexual believers and the observing world should not be left in doubt about the church's mind on this issue during any further period of study. Even some who see some forms of homosexual behavior as moral are concerned that persons inside and outside the church will stumble in their faith and understanding if this matter is unresolved.

Ministry and Mission

In ministry the church seeks to express and portray the grace and mercy of Christ in worship, nurture, evangelism, and service to those within the covenant community. In mission the church proclaims to all the good news of redemption and reconciliation, calls persons and nations to repentant faith in Christ, and promotes and demonstrates the advance of his rule in history through healing works of mercy and prophetic witness that aim at justice and liberation.

In its ministry and mission the church must offer both to homosexual persons and to those who fear and hate them God's gracious provision of redemption and forgiveness. It must call both to repentant faith in Christ, urging both toward loving obedience to God's will.

The church's grappling with the issue of homosexuality has already energized its membership in a remarkable awakening of prayer and theological study. Our study should continue with the aim of reaching harmony in our diverging positions on homosexuality and other crucial issues. Our prayer should now be concentrated upon this process of internal reconciliation and also upon the creation of ministry with homosexual persons. Great love and care must be exercised toward homosexual persons already within our church, both those who have affirmed their sexual identity and practice and those who have in conscience chosen not to do so. We urge candidates committees, ministerial relations committees, personnel committees, nominating committees, and judicatories to conduct their examination of candidates for ordained office with discretion and sensitivity, recognizing that it would be a hindrance to God's grace to make a specific inquiry into the sexual orientation or practice of candidates for ordained office or ordained officers where the person involved has not taken the initiative in declaring his or her sexual orientation.

The Christian community can neither condone nor participate in the widespread contempt for homosexual persons that prevails in our general culture. Indeed, beyond this, it must do everything in its power to prevent society from continuing to hate, harass, and oppress them. The failure of the church to demonstrate grace in its life has contributed to the forcing of homosexual persons into isolated communities. This failure has served to reinforce the homosexual way of life and to heighten alienation from both church and society. The church should be a spiritual and moral vanguard leading society in response to homosexual persons.

Through direct challenge and support the church should encourage the public media—television, film, the arts, and literature—to portray in a wholesome manner robust, fully human life expressing the finer qualities of the human spirit. It should call upon its members and agencies to work to eliminate prejudicial and stereotypical images of homosexual persons in the public media.

Decriminalization and Civil Rights

There is no legal, social, or moral justification for denying homosexual persons access to the basic requirements of human social existence. Society does have a legitimate role in regulating some sexual conduct, for criminal law properly functions to preserve public order and decency and to protect citizens from public offense, personal injury, and exploitation. Thus, criminal law properly prohibits homosexual and heterosexual acts that involve rape, coercion, corruption of minors, mercenary exploitation, or public display. However, homosexual and heterosexual acts in private between consenting adults involve none of these legitimate interests of society. Sexual conduct in private between consenting adults is a matter of private morality to be instructed by religious precept or ethical example and persuasion, rather than by legal coercion.

Vigilance must be exercised to oppose federal, state, and local legislation that discriminates against persons on the basis of sexual orientation and to initiate and support federal, state, or local legislation that prohibits discrimination against persons on the basis of sexual orientation in employment, housing, and public accommodations. This provision would not affect the church's employment policies.

Conclusions

I. *Response to Overture 9 (1976)*

The Presbytery of New York City and the Presbytery of the Palisades have asked the General Assembly to give "definitive guidance" in regard to the ordination of persons who may be otherwise well qualified but who affirm their own homosexual identity and practice.

The phrase "homosexual persons" does not occur in the Book of Order of the United Presbyterian Church. No phrase within the Book of Order explicitly prohibits the ordination of self-affirming, practicing homosexual persons to office within the church. However, no phrase within the Book of Order can be construed as an explicit mandate to disregard sexual practice when evaluating candidates for ordination. In short, the Book of Order does not give explicit direction to presbyteries, elders, and congregations as to whether or not self-affirming, practicing homosexual persons are eligible or ineligible for ordination to office.

Therefore, the 190th General Assembly (1978) of The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America offers the presbyteries the following definitive guidance:

That unrepentant homosexual practice does not accord with the requirements for ordination set forth in Form of Government, Chapter VII, Section 3 (37.03): . . . "It is indispensable that, besides possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, natural and acquired, everyone undertaking a particular ministry should have a sense of inner persuasion, be sound in the faith, live according to godliness, have the approval of God's people and the concurring judgment of a lawful judicatory of the Church."

In relation to candidates for the ordained ministry, committees should be informed by the above guidance.

II. *Recommendations*

Consistent with this policy statement and conclusions, the 190th General Assembly (1978):

1. Adopts this policy statement and directs the Office of the General Assembly to send a copy of the policy statement to all congregations, presbyteries, and synods and to provide it for widespread distribution.

2. Receives the background paper of the Task Force to Study Homosexuality as a study document, and directs the Office of the General Assembly to provide copies to all congregations, presbyteries, and synods and to make such copies available to others upon request.

3. Urges judicatories, agencies, and local churches to undertake a variety of educational activities, using both formal and informal church structures and organizations.

a. Since homosexuality is one issue that helps clarify our general responsibility to God in the world and focuses many dimensions of belief and action, such educational activities should probe such basic issues as (1) the strengthening of family life; (2) ministry to single persons and affirmation of their full participation in the Christian community; (3) nurturing lifestyles in our families, congregations, and communities that celebrate the values of friendship with peers of one's own sex and the opposite sex, committed choice of life-mates, joyous and loving fidelity within marriage, the establishment of homes where love and care can nurture strong children able to give loving service to others, and the fashioning of an atmosphere of justice, truth, and kindness that signals Christ's presence; (4) understanding how to extend ministries of deep concern and challenge to those who through choice or circumstance are sexually active, homosexually or heterosexually, outside the covenant of marriage; (5) helping those whose ability to show loving concern is destroyed by homophobia—the irrational fear of and contempt for homosexual persons.

b. Workshops in synods and presbyteries should be conducted both to explore ways to help homosexual persons participate in the life of the church and to discover new ways of reaching out to homosexual persons outside the church.

c. Courses on sexuality should be initiated by seminaries, colleges, and churches to provide officers and members with a systematic understanding of the dynamics of human sexuality as understood within the context of Christian ethics.

d. Contact and dialogue should be encouraged among groups and persons of all persuasions on the issue of homosexuality.

4. Urges presbyteries and congregations to develop outreach programs to communities of homosexual persons beyond the church to allow higher levels of rapport to emerge.

5. Urges agencies of the General Assembly, as appropriate, to develop responses to the following needs:

a. Support for outreach programs by presbyteries and congregations to homosexual persons beyond the church to allow higher levels of rapport to emerge.

b. Encouragement of contact and dialogue among groups and persons who disagree on whether or not homosexuality is sinful per se and whether or not homosexual persons may be ordained as church officers.

c. Development of structures to counsel and support homosexual persons concerned about their sexuality and their Christian faith.

d. Development of pastoral counseling programs for those affected or offended by the decision of this General Assembly.

6. Urges candidates committees, personnel committees, nominating committees, and judicatories to conduct their examination of candidates for ordained office with discretion and sensitivity, recognizing that it would be a hindrance to God's grace to make a specific inquiry into the sexual orientation or practice of candidates for ordained office or ordained officers where the person involved has not taken the initiative in declaring his or her sexual orientation.

7. Calls upon the media to continue to work to end the use of harmful stereotypes of homosexual persons; and encourages agencies of the General Assembly, presbyteries, and congregations to develop strategies to insure the end of such abuse.

8. Calls on United Presbyterians to reject in their own lives, and challenge in others, the sin of homophobia, which drives homosexual persons away from Christ and his church.

9. Encourages persons working in the human sciences and therapies to pursue research that will seek to learn more about the nature and causes of homosexuality.

10. Encourages the development of support communities of homosexual Christians seeking sexual reorientation or meaningful, joyous, and productive celibate lifestyles and the dissemination throughout the church of information about such communities.

11. Encourages seminaries to apply the same standards for homosexual and heterosexual persons applying for admission.

12. Reaffirms the need, as expressed by the 182nd General Assembly (1970) for United Presbyterians to work for the decriminalization of private homosexual acts between consenting adults, and calls for an end to the discriminatory enforcement of other criminal laws against homosexual persons.

13. Calls upon United Presbyterians to work for the passage of laws that prohibit discrimination in the areas of employment, housing, and public accommodations based on the sexual orientation of a person.

14. Declares that these actions shall not be used to affect negatively the ordination rights of any United Presbyterian deacon, elder, or minister who has been ordained prior to this date.

Further the 190th General Assembly (1978) calls upon those who in conscience have difficulty accepting the decisions of this General Assembly bearing on homosexuality to express that conscience by continued dialogue within the church.

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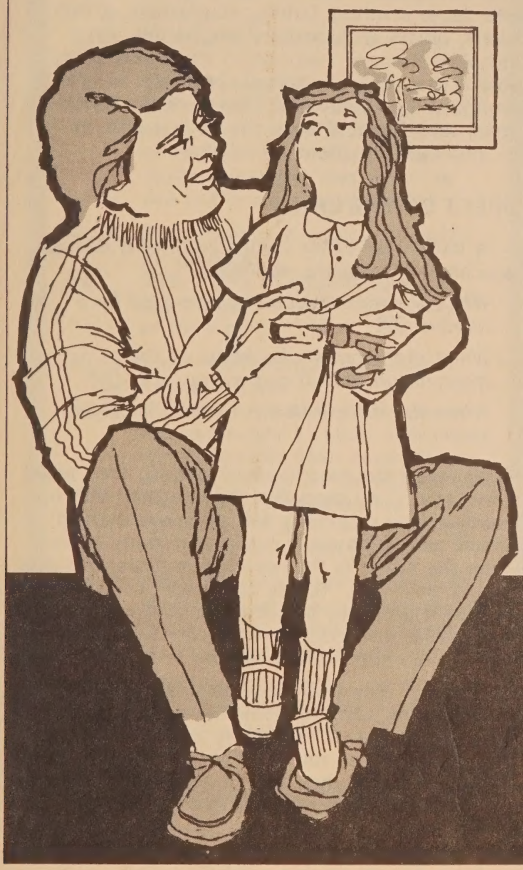
SEXUAL CHILD ABUSE

A Contemporary Family Problem



SEXUAL CHILD ABUSE *A Contemporary Family Problem*

WHO ARE THE MOLESTERS?

Contrary to popular belief, the average child molester is a man who is steadily employed, often married, with children of his own. A large study from the Oregon Department of Human Resources revealed that in 1973-1975, 85% - 90% of their cases of sexual child abuse involved fathers, stepfathers, grandfathers, uncles and mothers' boyfriends. An American Humane Association three-year study showed that 75% of child molestations were committed by family and friends of the family. Kinsey and Gebhard both found that 45% of the molesters are the child's father.

EFFECT ON THE CHILD

A child may suffer lasting emotional damage and mental problems, especially

When the molestation is committed by a relative OR

When the parents who know of the molestation do not put a stop to it OR

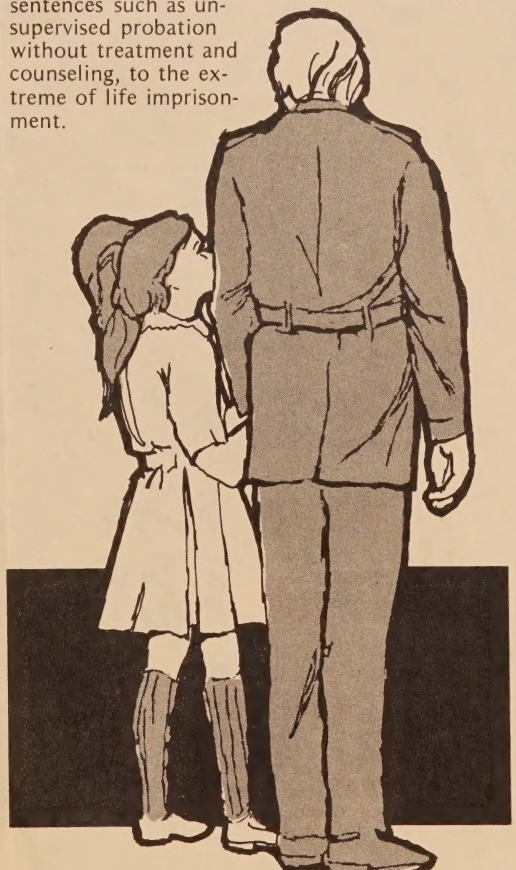
When the molestation is violent or under threat.

ALSO when the parents show disgust, fear, anger or hysteria, this upsets the child further. Often, parents refuse to believe the child was harmed if there are no physical injuries. In many cases where the father is the reported molester, he uses "family ties" and "family closeness" to pressure the family group to be silent about the problem. Thus, social workers and others are kept from helping the child and the family.

A mother may also avoid getting help for many reasons, including confusion, fear of family breakup and loss of the family breadwinner through court procedures. When the parents do not seek help or when they deny the problem, the child feels betrayed. Betrayal by one's own parents is cruelly painful and can cause deep, long-lasting harm to the child.

THE LAW AND SEXUAL CHILD ABUSE

In California, at least 13 sections of the Penal Code can be applied to cases of sexual abuse of minors. Because of fear, ignorance, or family loyalities, only a small number of cases are reported, and of those, there are few convictions of the molester. Judgements for the convicted offender can run the gamut from weak sentences such as unsupervised probation without treatment and counseling, to the extreme of life imprisonment.



WHAT TO DO

Nationally, helping professionals (doctors, nurses, educators, social workers and others) have a LEGAL and MORAL DUTY to report suspected sexual abuse, and can do so without fear of lawsuit. Private citizens can anonymously report suspected or known child molestation to the local social services, juvenile probation or police departments, OR use the special hot lines listed below. This will enable the situation to be investigated to determine the victim's need for protection and treatment.

HOT LINE INFORMATION: WHO TO CALL

In Los Angeles County: 24-hour toll-free ZEnith 2-1234 (Dial Operator and ask for number.)

In Orange County: 24-hours (714) 834-5353

In Ventura County: 24-hours (805) 648-6171

In San Diego County: 24-hours (714) 425-5322

Special Brochure Requests: This brochure may be printed with your local hotline numbers. Please write for details.

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SEXUAL CHILD ABUSE

MYTH vs FACT

Myth: *Molestation of children is very rare.*

Fact: The American Humane Association Children's Division estimates sexual child abuse is three times as common as child battering. Authorities agree that as few as one in five cases is reported. [3]

Myth: *Most molestations are committed by strangers.*

Fact: 75% – 85% of molestations are committed by family or friends of the victim. [1,2,3,5]

Myth: *Most child molesters are homosexual males.*

Fact: 90% of all reported molestations are committed by adult males on minor females. Most molestations on male minors are committed by men in a close relationship to the victim as well as by men who molest children of both sexes. [1,2,3]

Myth: *Most child molesters are mentally disordered or show bizarre behavior.*

Fact: The majority of child molesters are not severely disturbed. [1,3,4]

Myth: *Child molesters often use violence.*

Fact: Very few molestations involve the use of violence. [1,3,4]

FOR FURTHER READING

Send $3.00 to Child Sexual Abuse Task Force, P.O. Box 2G, San Jose, CA 95109 for the book Child Sexual Abuse. OR

Send $2.00 each for research papers "The Characteristics of the Sex Molester - - A Review of the Research" or "The Effects of Sex Molestation and Incest on Children and Adolescents - - A Review of the Research."

For single copies of this brochure Sexual Child Abuse: A Contemporary Family Problem, send 10 ¢ and a large stamped, self-addressed envelope to ACLU/GRC, P.O. Box 480029, Los Angeles, CA. 90048. Send 50¢ for 2-5 copies. For lots of 100 send $4.00 per lot.

NOW NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN

GAY RIGHTS ACLU CHAPTER

RESEARCHED and PUBLISHED BY:

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Gay Rights Chapter, American Civil Liberties Union, P.O. Box 480029, Los Angeles, CA. 90048

CITY OF BOSTON
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY HALL, BOSTON

KEVIN H. WHITE
MAYOR

AN OPEN LETTER

TO: The Boston Gay and Lesbian Community

FROM: Brian McNaught

RE: THE BOSTON PROJECT: Toward an Agenda for Gay and Lesbian Citizens

DATE: Wednesday, January 19, 1983

The Office of the Mayor is initiating a comprehensive, landmark study to identify and analyze the needs of gay and lesbian citizens and to develop a workable agenda for the government to better meet those needs.

Entitled "The Boston Project: Toward an Agenda for Gay and Lesbian Citizens", the study will involve a series of issue-oriented roundtable discussions, special inquiry sessions and hearings on neighborhood life. These will be conducted between February and April, 1983. The conclusions of the study will be presented to the Mayor in July.

The Boston Project is being coordinated through the office of the Mayor's Liaison to the Gay and Lesbian Community. It is being designed and implemented by a specialist hired by the City specifically for this project. In addition, a graduate student in community development is working on identifying the unique issues faced by lesbian citizens.

This ground breaking project will seek to identify the approximate size and diversity of the gay and lesbian communities, the neighborhoods in which the majority of these citizens live and the problems they encounter because they are gay and lesbian or which go unresolved because they fear exposure. The issues around which roundtable discussions and special inquiries will be convened include: Law and Order (police, prisons and protective legislation), Health and Hospitals, Welfare and Youth Services, Women's Concerns, Minorities Within Minorities, Businesses, Education and the Arts and Cultural Life. The hearings on Neighborhood Life will focus on services, such as fire, public works and housing.

The recommendations which result from these hearings will be made to the City for future programming and for improving existing services. These workable recommendations are to be offered as an agenda for this municipal government for many years to come.

Serving on the panels will be individuals from the gay and lesbian community and from City government who have an interest, expertise and/or responsibility for a particular area of concern. Other persons involved are being selected for their skills in group process and social research.

The Boston Project is needed for two major reasons. Pervasive myths and stereotypes about homosexuality have created an atmosphere of homophobia -- the irrational fear and hatred of homosexuality -- in much of society. Because of this, most gay men and lesbians fear disclosing their sexual orientation. This fear frequently discourages them from asking the City for services to which they are entitled. A gay male couple which has been robbed in the South End, for instance, might well choose not to call the police from fear of being identified as gay, ridiculed and subsequently denied a professional response.

Secondly, the controversial nature of homosexuality and the invisibility of the gay and lesbian community have contributed to making the needs of gay and lesbian citizens at times unknown or a low priority for many governmental and social service agencies. A hospital administrator, for instance, ignorant of the value and meaning of gay relationships, easily develops rules on visitation which separates gay male and lesbian patients from the significant people in their lives.

Elderly gay people, runaway youths who are gay, homeless gay men and lesbians, gay disabled persons and gay prisoners, among others, all have unique, unarticulated, legitimate needs which the City of Boston could and is committed to meet.

Individuals who would like more information on the Boston Project or who would like to participate in this program are encouraged to call Gary Laforest, in City Hall, at 725-3863 or 3847.